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ANDREW FERGUSON
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the weekly Standard

AUGUST 4, 2008 $4.95

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Smart energy policies and good energy politics? It's up to Congress.

While volatile energy costs and prices at the pump have been unwelcome, they could renew the nation's focus on finding real, long-term solutions to our country's serious energy challenges.

The rise in fuel prices has been largely due to demand growth outstripping supply growth. That has produced a dramatic increase in global crude oil prices, the most important factor (by far) in determining what we all pay for gasoline and diesel fuel. Congress needs to address the challenge of providing tomorrow's consumers with the growing supplies of energy they will need – and, specifically, options to encourage additional supplies of domestic oil and natural gas.

We must expand supplies of all reliable, competitive forms of energy while moderating demand and improving efficiency

Some Congressional prescriptions, however, seem driven more by political whim than sound policy choices, and do little to address this supply-demand imbalance. In some instances, they could dramatically worsen it.

In fact, several proposals would discourage the very investments in new oil and natural gas supplies – and increased efficiency – so critical to meeting growing demand. So-called "price gouging" measures, for example, constitute de facto price controls. Such government intervention led to the curtailment of supplies that resulted in gas lines and shortages in the 1970s.

Some want to increase taxes on oil and natural gas companies. However, U.S. Department of Energy data show they already pay nearly double the effective income tax rate of all manufacturing industries. Even more importantly, increasing taxes means fewer dollars for investment in new supplies, increased efficiency and emerging energy technologies. That would compound the challenges that America's businesses and consumers are already facing.

Critically, America must produce more of its own energy, much of which remains off-limits to production, before demanding that other countries increase theirs. Proposed legislation, for example, that would subject OPEC nations to litigation in American courts could also result in severe retaliatory steps by these countries – not increased supplies of oil. We have enough domestic oil and natural gas to power more than 60 million cars and heat 160 million households for 60 years.

America's long-term energy security is best served by policies that actually expand supplies of all reliable, competitive forms of energy – oil and natural gas, petroleum products and alternatives – while moderating energy demand and improving efficiency. Our economic strength – now and in the future – absolutely depends on it. Let's work together to ensure a secure energy future. Learn more at EnergyTomorrow.org.

THE *people* OF AMERICA'S OIL AND NATURAL GAS INDUSTRY

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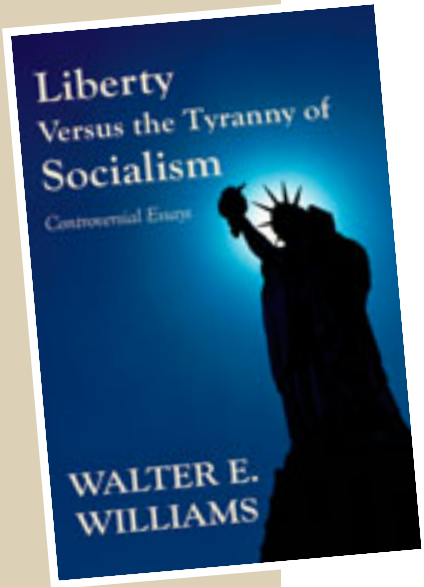

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Walter E. Williams is the John M. Olin Distinguished Professor of Economics at George Mason University and a nationally syndicated columnist.

October 2008, 377 pages
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the weekly Standard

The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013), a division of News America Incorporated, is published weekly (except the first week in January, third week in April, second week in July, and fourth week in August) at 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington D.C. 20036. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 50108, Boulder, CO 80322-0108. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders and changes of address to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 50108, Boulder, CO 80322-0108. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-850-682-7644 for subscription inquiries. American Express, Visa/MasterCard payments accepted. Cover price, $3.95. Back issues, $3.95 (includes postage and handling). Send letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. For a copy of The Weekly Standard Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, D.C. 20036. Copyright 2008, News America Incorporated. All rights reserved. No material in The Weekly Standard may be reprinted without permission of the copyright owner. The Weekly Standard is a registered trademark of News America Incorporated.

BPA INTERNATIONAL

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Vive la différence!

Cognitive differences between the sexes are not yet a state secret, though someday soon they may be. Anyone who cares to investigate can find out that they exist. The reason males are overrepresented among the world's chess and mathematical prodigies is not that little girls have been dressed in frilly aprons, steered towards the kitchen, and told that they may not become the next Fischer or Euler. Rather, because of how their brains are wired, boys are overrepresented at the two extremes of the bell curve, among both the super geniuses and the super duds.

The Scrapbook can safely point this out because our appointment to the presidency of Harvard has not yet materialized. When, three years ago, the actual president of Harvard University, Lawrence Summers, alluded to cognitive difference as one possible explanation for disproportionately male engineering faculties at elite schools, he was set upon by a flock of academic Harpies from Harvard and MIT and dragged from his perch.

As other institutions of higher learning tend to follow Harvard's lead, we can say with confidence that the job of a university president these days is to stick to his fundraising and keep his yap shut. Talking about ideas, especially ideas that are true but unacceptable to the Harpies, is what disc jockeys, stand-up comedians, and cab drivers are for.

Journalists, alas, cannot be added to this list. They increasingly see themselves as uniformed officers in the Department of Correct Thinking, enforcement division. On Friday, July 25, to cite a glaring example, the *New York Times* ran an article on page A12 headlined, "Math Scores Show No Gap for Girls, Study Finds." The *Times*'s Tamar Lewin reports: "Three years after the president of Harvard, Lawrence H. Summers, got into trouble for questioning women's 'intrinsic aptitude' for science and engineering—and 16 years after the talking Barbie doll proclaimed that 'math class is tough'—a study paid for by the National Science Foundation has found that girls perform as well as boys on standardized math tests." (Old slogan of the *New York Times*: "All the News That's Fit to Print." New slogan: "Your Source for Barbie Doll Rebuttals Since 1992.")

The *Times* continues: "The researchers looked at the average of the test scores of all students, the performance of the most gifted children and the ability to solve complex math problems. They found, in every category, that girls did as well as boys."

No, the researchers, perhaps to their dismay, did not find that. Certainly it's true that the average girl is every bit as capable in math as the average boy. It was a low blow by the *Times* reporter to pretend that Summers ever said otherwise. The controversy has to do with the highly gifted, and here the *Times* is engaged in an ideological cover-up.

The same study was summarized on the same day in the *Wall Street Journal*, which did an honest job of it: "Boys' Math Scores Hit Highs and Lows," reads the headline. The reporter explains: "Girls and boys have roughly the same average scores on state math tests, but boys more often excelled or failed, researchers reported. The fresh research adds to the debate about gender differences in aptitude for mathematics, including efforts to explain the relative scarcity of women among professors of science, math and engineering." The researchers found that "boys' scores were more variable than those of girls. More boys scored extremely well—or extremely poorly—than girls. . . . In Minnesota, for example, 1.85% of white boys in the 11th grade hit the 99th percentile, compared with 0.9 % of girls—meaning there were more than twice as many boys among the top scorers than girls."

You can see why Harvard and MIT might end up with a few more men than women in the math faculty lounge. These are institutions that pride themselves on doing business at the 99th percentile level and above, not at the 50th percentile. As for the *New York Times*, it remains securely at the top of the heap in tendentious reporting. ♦

Do They Dare to Impeach?

The left has been jonesing for impeachment for a long time. Since the Florida recount, actually. But it was just a fantasy until the 2006 election put some wind in their sails. It's still a fantasy, but now a much more elaborate one. There are some 200 pro-impeachment groups, with monikers such as Montana Partners for Impeachment and Impeach for Peace. Collectively, they claim 150,000 activist supporters. They seem a tad more desperate than you might expect. In a July letter to Rep. John Conyers and the House Judiciary Committee, the National Impeachment Network implored House Democrats to "give us something so that we know Democracy is not dead." The Scrapbook is happy to report that House Democrats were eager to string the poor suckers along.

On July 25, Conyers's Judiciary Committee held a hearing on "Executive Power and Its Constitutional Limitations." But don't let the ten dollar title fool you—it was a hearing about impeaching George W. Bush and Dick Cheney. Hundreds of impeachment proponents clogged the hallways of the Ray-

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(Classic Steiner, reprinted from our issue of September 23, 2002)

burn building. Only about 100 of them could fit in the main chamber; two overflow rooms quickly filled to capacity. The rest were left in the hallway dyspeptically chanting "Shame! Shame!" and "We want in!" (They did cheer when Dennis Kucinich's hottie wife made an appearance. The committee staff had asked her to go outside and calm the activists; they idolize her because she's living proof you don't have to look gross to be one of them.)

Conyers opened the hearing by invoking the administration's perfidy: the lying to drag America into war, the politicization of the Justice Department, the warrantless wiretapping, the persecution of Valerie Plame. Rep. Robert Wexler added torture to the list and said that impeachment was vital in order to "take our country back." Zoe Lofgren called Bush "the worst president our country has ever suffered." Every dispute of the last eight years was excavated with fresh indignity: Yellow cake! The 16 words! Monica Goodling! Patrick Fitzgerald!

Then came the witnesses. The first group was a collection of impeachment-minded congressmen not lucky enough to sit on Conyers's committee. Dennis Kucinich made his case that Iraq should be the motivating principle behind impeachment; Brad Miller made a more procedural argument, claiming that it's the refusal of Bush administration figures to testify before Congress that necessitates impeachment. Miller may have been the favorite of the impeachment hordes because he maintained that Congress should continue pursuing Bush, Cheney, et al. even after they've left office. "The many disputes between the Bush administration and Congress will not be moot if not resolved before the election in November or the inauguration in January," he explained. "Congress must continue the effort next year." Well, there's something to look forward to.

The second panel of witnesses included one voice of sanity (WEEKLY STANDARD contributor Jeremy Rabkin) and then varying levels of . . . less sanity. Vincent Bugliosi, for instance, claimed that it is already "beyond a reasonable doubt" that "under the law, [the Bush administration] are guilty of murder for the deaths of over 4,000 young American soldiers. . . . And let's not forget the over 100,000 innocent Iraqi men, women, children, and babies who have died horrible, violent deaths."

There was sometimes an air of reunion, as a number of characters showed whom we well remember from the last impeachment—Wexler, Lofgren, Jerrold Nadler, Sheila Jackson Lee, Bob Barr (he was in the second group of witnesses). They're pros, of course, able to argue against impeachment or for it; flipping the indignation on and off because they understand that it's all just a role-playing exercise. But the marks in the audience seemed to really believe. The entire impeachment process is more than a little cruel and unfair. And not just to President Bush. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'Obama prepares thoroughly for the big occasions. He is almost always well briefed, and he was traveling in sharp company—with Sens. Jack Reed and Chuck Hagel . . ." (David Broder, *Washington Post*, July 24, 2008.) ♦

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Casual

Have Fun, Schweinhund!

The Evanston Public Library has a small room devoted to sale books, some donated by patrons, others removed from their shelves because of continuous neglect by readers. I no longer collect books, but old habits die hard, and so I pop in every so often to see if there isn't some neglected book that I might acquire for the price of 50 cents.

In recent months I've bought a couple of slender volumes of the essays of Desmond MacCarthy, the *Collected Stories of Jean Stafford*, *The Benchley Roundup*. Just today I picked up Vernon Young's *On Film*, which has, rubber stamped on its first page, the word "Discard," which must mean that it has had so few readers that it is considered not worth the shelf space it has occupied since the early 1970s, when first published. The book carries the subtitle "Unpopular Essays on a Popular Art." I guess poor Vernon, who died in 1986, had no notion just how unpopular his essays would turn out to be.

I say "Vernon" with some trepidation. I happen to have edited *On Film* during the year or so I spent in publishing, and I recall his writing to me about the phenomenon of Americans he scarcely knew calling him by his first name. He didn't like it, not a bit. "When people do that to me," he wrote, "I always say to them: 'My good friends call me Mr. Young. Won't you do likewise." He also once asked me what I thought it was Americans meant when, upon parting, they said, "Have fun." The expression on his face when he emitted these words would have been more appropriate on that of a swordsman, just before running you through, uttering, "Die, dog."

Vernon Young was born in 1912, an Englishman but international in outlook. During my editing of his book, and during the time a little later when I asked him to write a few pieces for a magazine I edited, I addressed all correspondence with him to Stockholm, c/o Swerlow. I never met Swerlow, but people who knew Vernon said that he was adept at moving in on women, and I assumed she was one of them.

As befitted his *hauteur*, Vernon's look was aristocratic, slender, coldly elegant. He had a long neck, and wore high collars to disguise it. In profile, as he is photographed on the back of the dust jacket of *On Film*, he looks like a handsomer Bertrand Russell. He might have been a character in an Anthony Powell novel, a friend of X Trapnel or "Books" Bagshaw.

DARREN GYGI

As someone who had arranged for his collection of essays, and who solicited other writing from him, I suppose I was one of Vernon Young's minor benefactors. His great benefactor was Frederick Morgan, editor of the *Hudson Review*, which published his essays over more than three decades. Fred, an immensely good-hearted man, took it upon himself to watch out for him. When Princeton invited Vernon to speak, Fred worried about how he would be able to get Vernon back to Sweden.

The only time I met Vernon Young, he stared at me, or so I felt, as if through a jeweler's loupe. I felt he was testing me, carefully weighing his judgment, the way he might a suspiciously middlebrow movie. Vernon was an immitigable highbrow, rigorous, unbending, more interested in *film* than in movies. He wrote with great suavity about new films from Asia, Italy, Mexico, Sweden, France, Italy, England, always with an eye to capturing the element of national culture at play in the work. Here is a sample of Vernon's writing:

> If I say that Europeans are frequently more coherent when translating the raw material of the American scene into movie substance, I don't expect the remark to be taken as a finality. But no domestic social realism film I've yet seen, expressionist or naturalistic, has caught even a reverberation of the polyglot wonder discovered by Francois Reichenbach in his "documentary," *L'Amérique insolite*.

Vernon was, in other words, not someone you would want to invite to Adam Sandler's latest flick. He was also the sort of writer whom as an editor you wouldn't ask to change a comma unless you had good arguments lined up in advance for your request. A friend once told me that he blew a large fee to write some captions for *Vogue* because they wanted him to make some small changes in what he had sent them. A difficult, even an obstinate man, Vernon, but a man with his own kind of unblinking integrity, and lofty critical principles such as we are not likely soon to see again.

I'm glad to own this copy of Vernon Young *On Film*. Having had a small hand in bringing the book into the world, I figure the least I can do is provide it with a good home.

Joseph Epstein

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the weekly Standard

Look, Ma, No Arms

Early in 2001, President Bush approved the export of arms to democratic Taiwan. At the time, Bush said the United States would do "whatever it takes" to defend its tiny, besieged Pacific ally. That was yesterday. Today, it's looking more like Bush was just kidding.

How else to explain the administration's recent decision to freeze $16 billion worth of the arms deals? Bush approved the sale of Patriot missiles, Apache helicopters, and submarines to Taiwan more than seven years ago. Since then Taiwan has also requested 66 F-16 fighter jets to replace its aging planes. The Taiwanese legislature has appropriated the money with which to buy the weapons. In some cases it has already even put down payments. In return, America has given Taiwan a whole lot of nothing.

On July 16, the head of Pacific Command, Admiral Timothy Keating, told an audience at the Heritage Foundation that the administration has concluded "there is no pressing, compelling need for, at this moment, arms sales to Taiwan of the systems that we're talking about." This must have been news to the Taiwanese government, which says the weapons are needed to defend Taiwan. And it certainly must have been a surprise to the authors of the Pentagon's annual report on Chinese military power, who have for the past several years noted the dangerous shift in the military balance of power between Taiwan and China.

Taiwan president Ma Ying-Jeou took office last May, pledging to improve relations between Taiwan and China while protecting his democracy's sovereignty. To that end, in recent months the two countries have resumed cross-strait talks, allowed direct flights between the mainland and Taipei, and pursued further economic integration.

Yet Ma also understands that he must negotiate from a position of strength. For the United States to renege on its commitments would weaken Ma's hand at a critical time. After all, his government is only a few months old and Beijing is no doubt searching for weaknesses. American self-doubt and lack of follow through—in effect, a lack of American resolve and confidence in Ma's government—may lead Chinese policymakers to think that they can act provocatively.

Beijing has already gotten away with a lot. China is a rising autocratic power that has suffered no consequences for its gross human rights violations and support for rogue regimes. The military buildup on the Chinese side of the Taiwan Strait continues uninterrupted. There are now more than a thousand Chinese missiles pointed at Taiwan. In the last decade the Chinese have deployed more than 300 advanced aircraft across the Strait. China has five ongoing submarine programs. A massive, underground nuclear submarine base was recently detected on Hainan Island.

China has reasons for its buildup. It is meant, among other things, to deter unilateral declarations of Taiwanese independence. The authors of the Defense Department's 2008 report on Chinese military power wrote, the "ongoing deployment of short-range ballistic missiles, enhanced amphibious warfare capabilities, and modern, long-range anti-air systems opposite Taiwan are reminders of Beijing's unwillingness to renounce the use of force." The greater the military imbalance between China and Taiwan, the more likely China is to use military force in a cross-strait dispute. This is another reason the deal is necessary. Taiwan requires arms to serve as a deterrent against the mainland.

Why the delay? The administration has provided only a series of excuses. First the deal was held up because Washington was displeased with Taiwan president Chen Shui-bian's pro-independence rhetoric. Now Chen is gone, replaced by Ma's quietist diplomacy. The new excuse is that fulfilling our end of the bargain would upset China on the verge of next week's Beijing Olympics. Even if this were the case, and it probably is not, the administration has to shoulder much of the blame. Its foot-dragging in years past helped produce this impasse (though Taiwan's then-opposition Kuomintang party was also a problem). And once the Olympics are over, and the weapons still have not been exported, expect the administration to say that it cannot fulfill its commitments to Taiwan because to do so may jeopardize China's participation in the North Korean denuclearization talks.

All of these excuses point to the actual reason for the delay: America's current Taiwan policy is motivated by fear. We are afraid of upsetting China and afraid, in turn, of what an upset China might do in response. And the consequence of this fear is a weakened position for the United States and its East Asian allies.

On a visit to Taipei last week, former Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz told reporters that he expected the arms sales will be approved. We hope he is right. Let's not forget, however, that the Taiwan Relations Act also gives Congress a say in the defense assistance provided to Taiwan. Should the White House continue to drag its feet, it will fall to Congress to speak out in support of a democratic ally. And the message Congress might deliver is simple: Who is served when America neglects her friends in a misguided effort not to offend her rivals?

—Matthew Continetti, for the Editors

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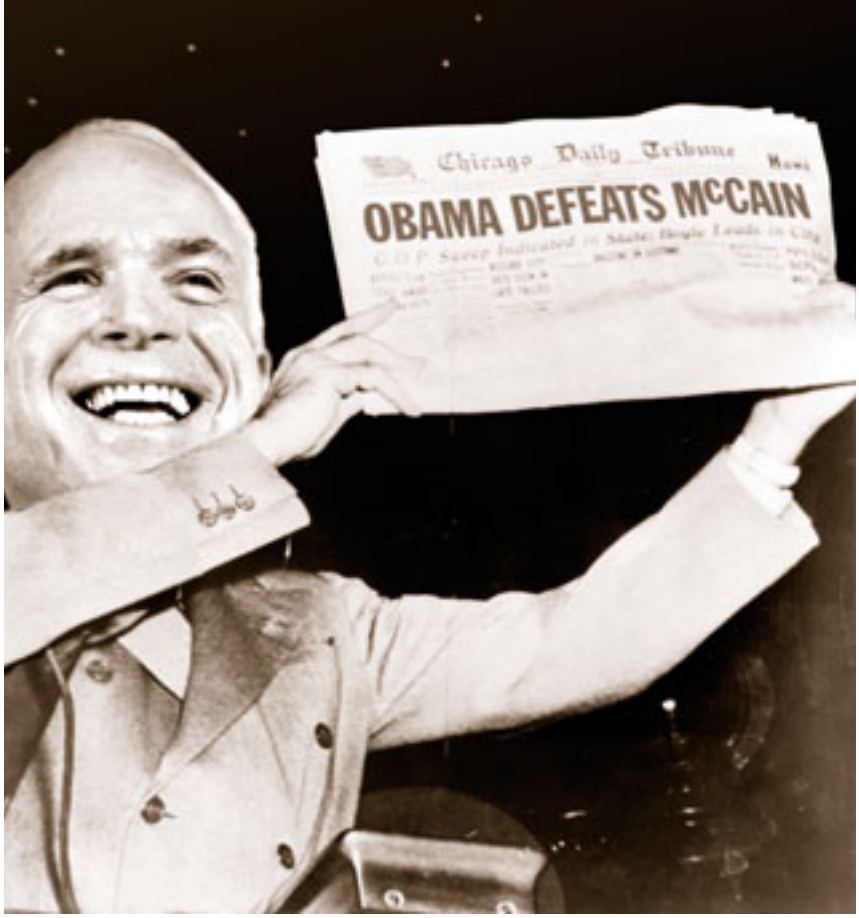
Dewey Like Obama

Is it 1948 all over again?

BY PHILIP TERZIAN



Last week, after Barack Obama had consented to allow the people of Western Europe and the Middle East to gaze upon him, Republicans in America seemed especially disheartened. Their presumptive candidate, John McCain, trailed Obama in the polls. The press, when it wasn't breathlessly chronicling Barack or Michelle Obama, was reporting on bank failures and mortgage foreclosures. Senate Democrats were talking about picking up as many as eight seats in November. Neither candidate had yet been formally nominated by his party, but the campaign already seemed like 1996—and with McCain playing the role of 73-year-old Bob Dole.

And yet, as any student of politics will admit, the conventional wisdom is often mistaken, and perceptions in the media can be deceiving. To be sure, there *is* something of Bob Dole in John McCain: He is a decorated war veteran, 72 years old, has been a fixture in the Senate for years, and his self-deprecating wit endears him to reporters. But just as there are limits to Dole-McCain parallels, Barack Obama bears little resemblance to Bill Clinton, or some other favorite Democrats. For that matter, take away the Harvard diploma and the well-dressed wife in the pillbox hat, and Obama has little in common with John F. Kennedy.

Indeed, as Obama returns from Berlin to prepare for his nomination in Denver, the modern candidate he seems most to resemble is one who was neither president nor a Democrat: Thomas E. Dewey of New York (1902-1971).

This is not meant to pile on Dewey, whose reputation has suffered enough in the 60-plus years since he lost campaigns for the presidency, in 1944 and 1948. Most New Yorkers probably only know him as the name attached to the thruway system that connects the Tappan Zee Bridge to Greater Buffalo. Likewise, most Americans will just recognize the unfortunate name that appears on the front page of the *Chicago Daily Tribune* held by a gleeful Harry Truman: "Dewey Defeats Truman."

Thomas Dewey was, in fact, an intrepid racket-busting prosecutor in New York City in the 1930s, who took on organized crime and political corruption; an impressive three-term governor of New York in the 1940s and 1950s; a distinguished lawyer, prominent citizen, and architect of the postwar Republican party that elected Dwight D. Eisenhower to the White House in 1952.

Unfortunately, the 1948 election was not so much a credentials contest as a clash of personalities, and Dewey was not, by that measure, an appealing candidate. Alice Roosevelt Longworth famously compared him to the figurine of a man on top of a wedding cake, and Richard Rovere once wrote that "he comes out like a man who has been mounted on casters and given a tremendous shove from behind."

Like a certain junior senator from Illinois, Dewey was famous for his well-groomed appearance, something of a stuffed shirt in manner, largely devoid of a sense of humor, indig-

Philip Terzian is literary editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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nant about criticism of himself, and a smooth orator who specialized in self-aggrandizing bromides ("We enter upon a campaign to unite America. On January 20 we will enter upon a new era. We propose to install . . . an administration which has faith in the American people, a warm understanding of their needs, and the competence to meet them"). He was also, like Barack Obama, just 46 years old, and widely regarded as an overnight sensation.

Above all, it was an overweening self-confidence that undermined the Republican candidate. The Democrats had controlled the White House for 16 years, and public opinion polls indicated that voters were ready for change. But the governor and his advisers were so beguiled by their early poll readings and press coverage, and persuaded that the campaign was over before it had begun, that a self-protective Dewey did not so much run for the presidency as pose and occasionally speak in anticipation of election.

"Ours is a magnificent land," he declared in Phoenix. "Every part of it. Don't let anybody frighten you or try to stampede you into believing that America is finished. America's future—like yours in Arizona—is still ahead of us." Like Obama, Dewey sought to preserve his advantage by avoiding specific proposals, and spoke not about *if* but *when* he would be elected president—or, as Obama likes to put it, commander in chief. To all concerned except Truman, the 1948 campaign was the formality before a preordained result.

Which leads to an obvious question: If Barack Obama shares certain weaknesses with Dewey, does John McCain possess any of Truman's strengths? In fact, despite some obvious dissimilarities, he does. Truman was 64 in 1948—comparatively old by the standards of the day, and after two terms in the Senate and three years in the White House, widely perceived as a creature of the nation's capital. Truman was also slightly irascible in manner, plainspoken—sometimes vulgar—and a self-described purveyor of straight talk and common sense.

He was also an awkward public speaker, prone to the occasional public gaffe ("to err is Truman"), and while liked well enough by the Washington press corps, the butt of condescension. The chattering classes of 1948—senior journalists, academic analysts, Wall Streeters—were beguiled by Dewey and considered Truman a mild embarrassment.

Still, Truman was not without resources. Dewey's soaring speeches and airy generalities enabled Truman to frame his own issues, and his principal rhetorical opponent was not Dewey but the "no-good, do-nothing 80th Congress," which had wrested control of Capitol Hill from the Democrats. Paradoxically, this gave Truman a certain advantage: He was free to complain about what Congress had done during the previous two years, as well as what it had not done; and public regard for the House and Senate, then as now, was not high.

Of course, the world has changed in the intervening decades, and both Obama and McCain are skilled politicians. But it is useful to recall that what are now considered to be Dewey's miscalculations seemed shrewd at the time, and that no one—especially not the vast majority of Democrats—took Truman's chances seriously. The road to the White House, for observers and candidates alike, is strewn with banana peels. ♦

Sweet Nothings

A close reading of The Speech.

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

Anyone who wants to understand Barack Obama would do well to stay away from the radio and the TV. Obama is a theatrical presence. That's what it means to be "charismatic": To an unnerving degree his appeal relies on sight and sound rather than sense. Better, in my opinion, to stick to the printed word. On paper (or the computer screen) his words can be thought about and chewed over. You can understand him at your own pace, undistracted by that rich baritone, the regal bearing, the excellent drape of his Burberry suits.

The printed word has its problems too, of course. You really need to be on your toes if you're going to get anything out of a newspaper's election coverage. You've got to tune your ear to euphemism and translate as you go. So last Friday, having missed the television broadcasts of Obama's speech in Berlin the day before, I read the *Washington Post* with a cocked ear, and when I saw that the speech was described as "broadly thematic" and "sober and serious" I knew exactly what it meant: a boring speech full of blah blah blah.

And so it was. In the *Post* as elsewhere, as much coverage was devoted to the speech's setting—the sprawling crowds and the dramatic backdrop and the tingling sense of anticipation—as to the speech itself. The paper didn't even bother to print verbatim excerpts, as it usually does with a big-time address. The occasion had been taken as an invitation to deliver a summary of Obama's view of America's role in the world. When his handlers decided to schedule a speech in Berlin, they teed up comparisons with the portentous speeches that Presidents Kennedy and Reagan had delivered there.

Instead, in the heart of Europe, before 200,000 breathless admirers, Obama pulled himself up to his full height, lifted his chin, unlimbered those eloquent hands, and said nothing at all.

Obama's "nothing" is sometimes interesting anyway; there are point-

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ers in the vacuousness, as I saw when I read the full text on his campaign's website. He began the speech, as he often does, with a summary of his own life history, which elided into a history of the Cold War—mixing the two together, with his customary grandiosity. The history was nicely written up but not news. And the lesson he drew from it was, to be kind, idiosyncratic: The West's victory in the Cold War, he said, proved that "there is no challenge too great for a world that stands as one."

This will come as a surprise to anyone who lived through the Cold War or has even read about it. The thing about wars, even cold ones, is that the world doesn't stand as one; that's why there's a war. And in the Cold War the Soviet side was as united as the West; more so, probably. Left out of Obama's history was any mention of the ferocious demonstrations against the United States in the streets of Paris and West Berlin during the 1960s and 1980s, when American presidents were routinely depicted as priapic cowboys and psychopaths. Probably a fair number of the older members of Obama's audience had been hoisting those banners themselves 25 years ago.

So if "standing as one" didn't win the Cold War, what did? Obama didn't stop to answer, since his own reading of history seems to deny the premise of the question. Instead he hustled on to the present moment. Now, he said, "we are called upon again." To do what? Presumably to stand as one all over again, in the face of "new promise and new peril." Included in the latter are terrorism, global warming, and nuclear proliferation. But those perils aren't the worst of it. "The greatest danger of all is to allow new walls to divide us from one another."

The sentence is the heart of the speech and an instance of Obama's big weakness—his preference for the rhetorical flourish over a realistic account of things as they are. Most politicians share the weakness, and the preference has proved wildly attractive to Obama's supporters. But think it through: "New walls to divide us" is just a metaphor, a trope. A trope can't be the "greatest danger of all." A terrorist setting off a nuclear bomb in London—that's a danger. A revolution in Islamabad—that's a danger. A figure of speech is just a figure of speech.

And what will Obama have us do to avoid those nonmetaphorical dangers? He declined to get specific, aside from urging us to "answer the call." Floating along on a cloud of metaphor and generality allows Obama to do what he wants to do, in the Berlin speech and elsewhere. As a public figure he means to rise above any hint of conflict, and to suggest that problems and dangers dissolve when we "come together." And coming together, "standing as one," is simply the logical outcome of every participant's correctly understanding his best interest. What could be more reasonable?

It doesn't matter that human affairs never work out this way, no more in domestic politics than in foreign policy. The assumption that they do is what lends so many of Obama's utterances their greeting-card simplicity and appeal. The effect is almost soporific: "America cannot turn inward," he says. Check. "Now is the time to build new bridges." All set to go. "We must defeat terror." True dat. "Every nation in Europe must have the chance to choose its own tomorrow free from the shadows of yesterday." Roger. "We must help answer the call for a new dawn in the Middle East." Go ahead: Argue.

To pump a little vigor into his limp sentiments, Obama attached them to a hypnotic refrain. "This is the moment," he said in Berlin, repeatedly. But where's the urgency come from? What's the rush? In the long train of platitudes he suggested no discrete, definable policy that needed to be adopted urgently, beyond his call to unity, which isn't a policy but an aspiration. You get the idea that the urgency doesn't arise from an assessment of reality but from a rhetorical need. He's got to keep the folks on their toes somehow.

Obama couldn't come to Berlin

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and deliver a speech full of portent, as Reagan and Kennedy did before him, and as his publicists suggested he might. For all the talk about this being our time and us being the people, Obama shows no sign of really believing we live in portentous times. This is surely part of his appeal. It's not surprising that when he came to Berlin and said nothing at all, none of his admirers seemed disappointed. After eight years of overheated history, *nothing* comes as a relief. ♦

Obama's Centrist Economic Team

Pro-free trade and pro-Wal-Mart are not enough.

BY CESAR CONDA

Senator Barack Obama declared in a recent interview on the business cable channel CNBC: "Look, I am a pro-growth, free-market guy. I love the market." And Obama's economic team appears to support this claim. His main advisers, Jason Furman and Austan Goolsbee, are both centrist, pro-free traders; one is a defender of Wal-Mart, and the other is a self-described "free-market type" who has drawn praise from the likes of George Will.

If Obama wins the White House, Furman and Goolsbee are slated to be at the center of the economic policy-making universe, with Furman a likely appointee as director of the National Economic Council and Goolsbee the top candidate to be the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers. So do these possible appointments indicate that a President Obama would move towards the center and become a "free market guy" as feared by the left or follow through with his statist campaign platform of protectionism and expansion of the regulatory state?

Although Austan Goolsbee is a professor at the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business, he is not a part of the famous "Chicago School" of such prominent free-market macroeconomists as George Stigler and Milton Friedman. Rather, he's one of the young economists whose work is referred to as the "new social economics," focusing on how people behave and make decisions in their everyday lives. He has written columns for the *New York Times* on such topics as why Americans came to embrace reality TV and why billionaires line up to bid for professional sports franchises.

On the left-to-right spectrum, Goolsbee appears to be smack-dab in the middle. He is pro-free trade, not an alarmist on globalization, and a defender of subprime lending on the grounds that it has expanded homeownership for minorities. But he is opposed to supply-side tax cuts—especially any further reductions in the top marginal rate—and personal retirement accounts for Social Security, and thinks the Internal Revenue Service should become the nation's largest tax preparer.

According to George Will:

> Goolsbee no doubt has lots of dubious ideas—he is, after all, a Democrat—about how government can creatively fiddle with the market's allocation of wealth and opportunity. But he seems to be the sort of person—amiable, empirical and reasonable—you would want at the elbow of a Democratic president, if such there must be.

Jason Furman, the director of economic policy for the Obama campaign, was head of the Hamilton Project, a centrist, pro-trade policy research group founded by former Treasury secretary Robert Rubin. Furman can best be described as a free trader who supports a robust social insurance safety net for displaced American workers. He favors broadening the U.S. corporate tax base by lowering the corporate tax rate and limiting exemptions, à la Reagan's 1986 tax reform. Most interesting, Furman wrote a 2005 paper arguing that Wal-Mart's low prices and other policies benefit low-income consumers. On the left side of the spectrum, Furman strongly supports universal health care, opposes Social Security privatization, and supports progressive taxation.

Both Furman and Goolsbee have admirers on the right. Kevin Hassett of the American Enterprise Institute (one of John McCain's economic advisers) calls Goolsbee "an honest and honorable scholar who can be quite clever academically. He is left-leaning, but would be a voice of reason in an Obama administration." Of Furman, Hassett says: "Jason is a lot like Goolsbee, but has been more politically active. His deep well of experience will serve Obama well." Glenn Hubbard, a former chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers under President Bush, said: "Austan Goolsbee is a very talented young economist; indeed, I wish he was on my faculty at Columbia Business School (even though I disagree with his research showing a small distortionary effect of high marginal tax rates)." Hubbard went on to say: "A team of Austan and Jason gives the Obama campaign punch in economic ideas—though the statist platform of the candidate suggests they have a tough road ahead!"

With such fans, it's not surprising that Furman and Goolsbee's roles on the Obama campaign are generating quite a bit of angst on the left. Lori Wallach of Public Citizen told the *Los Angeles Times*: "Furman seems like a

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liability, given his anti-worker writings and statements about Wal-Mart, fair trade and other middle-class issues." In that same article, Marco Trbovich of the United Steelworkers said: "[Furman] is a very bright fellow, but he is an unalloyed cheerleader for the trade policies that have been very destructive to manufacturing jobs in this country." In an article in the *Nation* about both Furman and Goolsbee, entitled "Obama's Chicago Boys," Naomi Klein wrote: "But before Obama can purge Washington of the scourge of Friedmanism, he has some ideological housecleaning of his own to do."

But how much comfort can conservatives take from Obama having such "reasonable" economic advisers? There is certainly no question that an Obama administration is a frightening prospect for free-market advocates. This self-described "free market guy" has said he opposes the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) and will reopen the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). He would sign legislation raising the minimum wage and ending secret balloting for workers deciding on unionization. He would require employers to pay for health insurance for their workers, mandate coverage for all children, and expand Medicaid and other government programs. He wants higher fuel-economy standards for new cars and trucks, power companies to produce some of their electricity from solar and renewable sources, and federal ethanol mandates.

Furman and Goolsbee are obviously in agreement with much of this agenda, and both have been strong advocates of progressive taxation. Goolsbee, in particular, has taken direct aim at the conservative movement's biggest economic policy achievement of the past three decades: the sharp reduction in marginal tax rates, especially the top personal income tax rate. He is a leader in the liberal onslaught against the Laffer Curve, producing research to show that income tax cuts "for high-income taxpayers likely gave windfalls to those whose incomes were already sharply rising because of broader market forces."

And, while both Furman and Goolsbee purport to believe in free trade, they seem to have no trouble working for a candidate with a pronounced and public protectionist bent. Obama's promise to reopen NAFTA alone should cause any degree of free-market economist pause. The facts about NAFTA's benefits are unassailable: Since its enactment in 1993 through 2001, U.S. employment increased from 120 million to 135 million. Jason Furman should certainly know the benefits of NAFTA inside and out; he served as a special economic assistant to President Bill Clinton, for whom the passage of NAFTA was a major political victory in 1993. That Furman and Goolsbee have suspended their belief in free trade does not bode well for how hard they would fight protectionism in an Obama White House.

The next president and his economic team will face enormous challenges—from managing the decline in the housing market to stabilizing the U.S. dollar and reducing energy prices. Furman and Goolsbee will be at the elbow of a President Obama, if there is one. To date, they have shown little appetite for fighting for free-market views and appear perfectly comfortable working for a candidate who is running on a statist platform of protectionism and bigger government. ♦

Le Kennedy Noir

Paris sulks: Why Berlin and not us?

BY ANNE-ELISABETH MOUTET

Paris

However you slice it, the Obama whirlwind Paris tour (three hours on the ground), sandwiched between the candidate's rock-star speech to ecstatic crowds in Berlin's Tiergarten and dinner with Gordon Brown at 10 Downing Street, left the French, well, rather miffed. It was the second question posed at the press conference Obama gave with President Sarkozy at the Elysée on Friday afternoon. "Is it," the Agence France-Presse reporter asked, noting that the candidate had chosen Berlin for his major speech, "because it's not so well considered to like France in America?"

Obama waffled elegantly, choosing to explain that he'd already been abroad for an unprecedented period, over a week, unheard of for a candidate. (There was more than a hint of weary duty at work here, as if he were already president with a life constrained by greater forces, instead of having calibrated the entire exercise, from Helmand Province to Whitehall, with a micron-accurate eye to the best transformative spin.) Later in the 40-minute conference, Obama obliquely acknowledged the point, crediting Sarkozy, with whom he'd been indulging in a somewhat self-conscious best-buddies lovefest throughout, with "having made it possible to call French fries 'French fries' again in America." "Americans love France," he protested.

Setting the tone, Sarko sparked guffaws with his less convincing opening statement that "the French love America." ("It would be worse if I didn't say it," he countered, which elicited more genuine laughter.)

Amid all the courteous hypocrisies, it was obvious each saw in the other a first-rate political animal. Sarkozy had been quick to recall he'd met Obama in Washington back in 2006, when he himself was a candidate for the presidency. "And during that visit, Mr. Sar-

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kozy only met with two senators, myself and John McCain," Obama added. "So it's obvious he has a very good political nose."

"When I think of the two of us sitting in that [Senate] office that day," Sarko reminisced, "well, one has managed to get elected. It's the other's turn now, isn't it? I'm not saying this to meddle. France will do very well with whoever becomes president of the United States."

Obama, whom French pundits call *le Kennedy noir*, had traveled to the Middle East and Europe to acquire gravitas and foreign-affairs polish. Sarkozy made much of what the two men had in common.

"We are both the sons of immigrants, with foreign-sounding names, went into politics at a time when people like us weren't expected to get to the top, and we both beat women opponents in a presidential contest" he said, very much aware of the reflected glamour Obama—who by some polls is favored by 86 percent of the French—could shine on his own currently dismal numbers. (The first question at the press conference, from an articulate and pugnacious black American reporter, was to Sarkozy, asking how he felt standing next to someone who looked like the people he'd called "scum" when faced with riots as minister of the interior. Sarkozy replied that he was the first French president to appoint people very much like that to his cabinet, pointing out that during the 2005 French race riots, "nobody died, and the only injured were in the ranks of the police. Thank you for allowing me to make that point.")

PAUL MOYSE

Obama, you could tell, was the ultimate arm-candy for embattled European leaders, beating even Carla Bruni (Sarkozy's beautiful new wife, who remained absent from the short Paris proceedings) in sheer wattage. And the senator knew it. His staff, no doubt briefed on the not very dignified leadership free-for-all currently tearing apart the French Socialist party, had cagily refused to meet with any French opposition leaders. Adding insult to injury, Obama did agree to see Britain's David Cameron, the Conservative leader, telegraphing an undiplomatic but probably accurate assessment of Prime Minister Gordon Brown's political chances.

When challenged by the AFP reporter, Obama said apologetically he felt he'd been addressing not just Germany but all of Europe from Berlin. From anyone else, this could have been taken as the height of tactlessness, but Obama, facing a smaller but just as enthusiastic audience in the Elysée's *Salle des Fêtes* as he had near the Berlin Victory column, was given a free pass.

For in Paris, it's the media and the *banlieues* (the projects) that drive the Obamamania filling every front page, from *Libération* to *Le Figaro*. There were more people inside the Elysée, jostling for a seat in the press room or a good camera angle in front of the palace, than in the rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré outside. A crowd 300 strong, including a sizable number of tourists and more black faces than one usually sees in this exclusive part of town, started a chant of "Yes, We Can!" outside as the candidate's motorcade was leaving at full speed for the airport, followed by a busload of traveling correspondents. We, the Paris-based press, went to interview them under the blasé gaze of the police.

"Did you see him? Isn't he marvelous?" a cheerful secretary named Victoire, come specially from her office near the Opéra with a girlfriend, gushed. "We wouldn't see this in France." "That's why America is so *formidable*," said the friend, who like Victoire was born in northern Paris of Cameroonian parents.

I couldn't help contrasting their large smiles and enthusiastic tone with the silkily venomous and cultured voice of Hubert Védrine, the former Socialist foreign minister, heard this very morning on Radio Luxembourg. Védrine coined the expression "hyperpower" about America. He opposes it. It was, he explained, simply time for America to understand she couldn't go it alone, but had to behave responsibly among other nations and international institutions. Unfortunately, in his view, Barack Obama had started making worrisome statements, several steps back from his earlier multilateralist commitments.

"But you know," Védrine confided to his morning-show audience with Talleyrand-like sophistication, "that's just the way you have to win an election, isn't it? From a few things Mr. Obama has let escape, I think he still believes in the principles he had at the beginning. I am very hopeful." ♦

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Supremely Screwed Up

A do-over for the High Court?

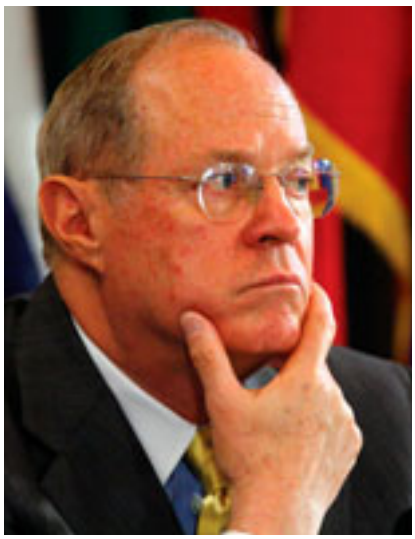
BY TERRY EASTLAND

The Supreme Court ended its term this year by making a mistake in one of its most controversial cases—the case in which it held unconstitutional a Louisiana law authorizing capital punishment for the rape of a child under 12 years of age.

Writing for a majority of five in *Kennedy* v. *Louisiana*, Justice Anthony Kennedy said that while 37 jurisdictions—36 states plus the federal government—have the death penalty, only 6, all of them states, authorize it for child rape. Kennedy cited those numbers in determining that American opinion was divided about but on balance clearly against using the death penalty to punish those who rape children. For Kennedy, the numbers were evidence of a "national consensus" against making child rape a capital crime, an affirmation that the nation's "standards of decency" have been properly "evolving."

Three days after the decision was handed down, a military reservist and lawyer who blogs on military justice issues pointed out that in fact, contrary to what the Court had said, there is a federal statute expressly authorizing capital punishment for child rape. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006 is the law, and in its revision of the sex crimes section of the Uniform Code of Military Justice it explicitly authorizes the death penalty for soldiers who commit child rape.

As it happened, not just the *Kennedy* majority failed to notice the existence of this federal law. So did the four dissenting justices. So did petitioner Kennedy and respondent Louisana. Moreover, none of the 10 friends of the court in the case, not even one, cited the law. Neither did the solicitor general's office, which represents the government in the Supreme Court and on which the Court counts to advise it regarding any federal interest (such as a federal statute) that might be implicated in a case in which the government is not a party. Indeed, the solicitor general didn't even file a brief in *Kennedy*, a failure the Justice Department now regrets: "It's true that the parties to the case missed [the statute]," a Justice spokesman said last month, "but it's our responsibility."



Oops—Justice Anthony Kennedy

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This remarkably complete failure to take notice of an obviously relevant federal law quickly became a topic of speculation inside Washington. But more important than why it happened is whether the Court will reconsider the case.

Last week Louisiana petitioned for a rehearing. It's a long shot: A leading authority on the Court's history reported in 2007 that the Court has granted a rehearing petition only 22 times in history. But in this case there is good reason for the Court to grant a rehearing, even one limited to the significance of the federal statute, for only through a rehearing can the Court assure the public that it has weighed all relevant information.

A rehearing would certainly present challenges to the *Kennedy* majority. By 1989, as a result of judicial decisions invalidating capital rape laws, no state authorized the death penalty for child rape. In 1995, however, Louisiana became the first of the six states since then to pass a capital child rape law. Kennedy minimized the significance of these legislative enactments and the prospect that there might be more of them. And, of course, he thought that only states had an interest in using the death penalty for child rape. In a rehearing, the Court would have to include the federal law in its "consensus" analysis.

Louisiana's petition points out that the change in federal law was "deliberate and premeditated." The Pentagon, in a report it prepared on sex crimes including child rape, discussed the Louisiana statute and attached it as an appendix. The legislation in which the capital child-rape provision was enacted passed both houses of Congress and was presented to the president, who signed it. It is, like all other federal laws, an expression of the nation's, and not just a state's, democratic will. And it is a plain and very recent expression. A question for the Court would be whether, in light of the federal statute, it could still believe there is, as Kennedy put it, "a national consensus against capital punishment for the crime of child rape."

That was one of the two rationales for the Court's decision. The other was the Court's "independent judgment that the death penalty is not a proportional punishment for

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the rape of a child." Justice Kennedy didn't say whether the majority leaned more on its view of national consensus or its own independent judgment about disproportionality. In the event of a rehearing and a revised opinion, the Court probably wouldn't want to rest its decision just on its own independent judgment, as the Court then would be saying it had been wrong about national consensus, and it would be more nakedly pitting its own moral judgment against that of an ostensibly self-governing people. That's a reason to think the Court would do all it could to maintain its national-consensus position.

If the Court finds itself in a tough place in *Kennedy* v. *Louisiana*, it's a place of its own making. The legal text the Court used to void the death penalty statute in *Kennedy* is, of course, the clause in the Eighth Amendment barring "cruel and unusual punishments." As originally understood, the clause contained no proportionality principle and prohibited only cruel methods of punishment that were already unusual when the amendment was added to the Constitution in 1791. As such, the clause left—and should still leave—ample room for the political branches to legislate (or ban) the death penalty as they see fit. But long ago the Court departed from the original meaning of the clause and embarked on its continuing mission to sharply constrain the use of the death penalty.

Some years ago Justice Antonin Scalia captured the essence of the problem that the Court's mission poses when he noted that "there is something to be said for popular abolition of the death penalty," but "there is nothing to be said for its incremental abolition by this Court."

Kennedy v. *Louisiana* is another incremental abolition, since in no previous case did the Court nullify a capital child-rape law. If there is a rehearing, perhaps the justices can tell us whether they read their own decision in *Kennedy* as it can only be read: as invalidating the federal statute they didn't know about. ♦

Distrust But Verify

Caving in to North Korea.

BY DAN BLUMENTHAL & AARON FRIEDBERG

Among the pieces of unfinished business that the Bush administration will pass on to its successor is a now five-year-old effort to denuclearize North Korea. Whoever takes office in January 2009 will inherit a process and a set of understandings that supporters claim have finally brought that goal within reach. But have they? A new administration should take the opportunity to pause and conduct its own assessment of where things stand and where they may be going.

Following North Korea's first test of a nuclear weapon in October 2006, the Bush administration reversed course and abandoned its previous policy of trying to mobilize multilateral pressure on Pyongyang. Instead of insisting that all serious negotiations be conducted in the context of the so-called Six Party talks, American representatives entered into a series of intense, secret one-on-one discussions with their North Korean counterparts. And instead of trying to tighten the cordon of economic sanctions and diplomatic pressure that it had struggled to build and maintain, the administration decided to ease off and began to discuss inducements to Kim Jong-Il in return for denuclearization.

By February 2007, the two sides had agreed to a step-by-step process in which each would give up something in return for concessions from the other. This reciprocal process, it was hoped, would lead eventually to a final settlement under which North Korea would abandon all elements of its nuclear weapons programs in return for economic assistance and acceptance as a member in good standing of the international community.

To date, the balance of concessions is running heavily in Pyongyang's favor. The United States has lifted painful financial sanctions on Kim and his cronies, provided significant shipments of fuel oil, and declared its intention to take North Korea off its lists of enemies and terror-supporting states, thereby opening the way for broader economic and diplomatic engagement.

In addition to these direct moves, Washington has been urging a skeptical Japan to soften its own hard-line policies, and it has dropped its objection to China and South Korea offering various forms of aid and economic assistance to the North. While his paranoia may prevent him from fully savoring the moment, Kim has good reason to feel more comfortable and secure than he did two years ago when the North conducted its nuclear test.

For their part, the North Koreans have taken steps to disable the aged plutonium-producing reactor complex at Yongbyon, including, most spectacularly, blowing up the reactor cooling tower before an audience of television cameras. Pyongyang has also provided a figure for the quantity of weapons-grade material it says it produced there, and a set of documents that supposedly support this claim.

These are not trivial steps. But at this point they are more show than substance. First and foremost, of course, is the fact that, despite all the fanfare, Pyongyang has yet to hand over an ounce of fissile material. Moreover, while Yongbyon has

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been disabled, it has not yet been dismantled. Although it would now take some time for the North to restart production of plutonium, the option of doing so remains.

Despite having pledged to provide a "complete and correct" account of all its nuclear activities, Pyongyang has also refused to address allegations that it has a separate highly enriched uranium program or to discuss past involvement in spreading nuclear technology. This in the face of strong circumstantial evidence that a serious highly enriched uranium program exists or may have existed at one time (including radioactive contamination of aluminum chunks the North turned over to prove that they had not been used to build enrichment centrifuges) and overwhelming evidence that North Korea helped Syria build the secret nuclear reactor that Israel destroyed last year.

Although the full details of the negotiations have not yet been released, the North is said to have "acknowledged" U.S. concerns on both of these fronts. What this means, at best, is that Pyongyang is saying: We didn't do anything wrong and we won't do it again!

Defenders of the current process acknowledge that the real heavy lifting of denuclearization remains ahead, but they are optimistic that it is about to begin. If the North does not now move promptly to complete the deconstruction of Yongbyon, agree to procedures for verifying its claims and handing over plutonium, and come clean on uranium and proliferation, the deal can be called off, concessions rolled back, and sanctions reimposed.

Having turned down the pressure, however, neither the Bush administration nor, more likely, its successor will find it so easy to ratchet it back up. The tantalizing hope of an eventual breakthrough just around the corner, North Korea's skill in giving just enough to keep the game going, fear of endangering relations with China and South Korea, and the absence of a clear alternative strategy could keep Washington locked in for months, even years, to come, no matter how disappointing the results. In the meantime, North Korea will remain a nuclear weapons state, and the threat of further proliferation will remain very much alive.

There is another possibility that is, in some ways, even more worrisome. Suppose that the North Koreans decide to give up their plutonium stockpile and production facilities, and the United States decides, in effect, to accept their assurances on uranium and proliferation. Such a deal might look appealing, but it would entail significant risks. Despite its denials, the Kim regime may in fact have the elements of a covert uranium enrichment program hidden in tunnels and caves, and perhaps dispersed among several facilities in different parts of the country. Working independently, or perhaps in collaboration with other aspiring nuclear powers such as Iran, the North could perfect the technologies of enrichment and produce fissile material for its own weapons, for sale to others, or both. Indeed, it may already have done so.

Without the most rigorous inspection and verification regime there is no way to be certain what the North Koreans are up to. Nor, given what is known about Pyongyang's past interest in uranium enrichment, its ongoing relationships with Iran (and, as we now know, Syria), and its extensive record of concealment, deception, and duplicity, is there any reason to give it the benefit of the doubt.

All of which brings us to the heart of the problem. In dealing with North Korea the only sensible approach is to "distrust and verify." To date, however, North Korea has not agreed to, and the Bush administration has not yet insisted upon, any serious measures to verify the full scope and status of the North's nuclear weapons programs. Those measures that reportedly have been discussed—site visits, interviews with scientists, and further access to documents—apparently apply only to a limited number of facilities at Yongbyon. As useful as it may be to gain firsthand access to these, what is more important is to set up procedures that will permit full access to all known nuclear-related installations, as well as mechanisms for ensuring (or at least reducing the chances) that other, hidden facilities do not exist.

For this purpose, the best available instrument is an understanding that would permit no-warning, challenge inspections of any suspicious facility or location, by the United States, other countries, and the IAEA. This is what Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi agreed to in order to demonstrate that he was serious about nuclear disarmament. In the Libyan case, the United States, the IAEA, and the U.K. had inspected facilities and destroyed and removed 55,000 pounds of nuclear related materials including design information, uranium enrichment materials, and thousands of centrifuge parts almost two years before President Bush announced the lifting of sanctions on Libya. If Kim Jong-Il is equally serious in changing the direction of his country, he should be willing to make a similar commitment.

As it reviews the status of the Six Party talks, the next administration should return to first principles and reexamine its goals. If the aim of American policy is still—as we believe it should be—the "complete, verifiable, irreversible dismantlement" of all North Korean nuclear programs, then there is no escaping the need for an inspections regime of the sort just described. Instead of being left for the very end of the negotiating process, verification should be moved to the top of the agenda. If the North is unwilling to accept the necessary measures, the United States should be prepared to walk away.

If, on the other hand, the next administration decides to settle for Yongbyon and a pile of plutonium, it should insist on an early date for their dismantlement and repatriation. But it should also be candid about the risks it has chosen to run. And it should begin at once to prepare for the next North Korean nuclear crisis. ♦

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First, Lose Three Straight Elections

Britain's Conservatives are finally emerging from the wilderness. Republicans can learn from them.

By Fred Barnes

London

David Cameron, the Conservative party leader, had the look of a defeated man last October when Martin Bright of the *New Statesman* spotted him walking, alone, across a hotel lobby. The occasion was the Conservatives' annual conference in the seaside town of Blackpool in northwest England. "The mood was really glum," Bright says. Cameron was white-faced. "He looked like a ghost."

Cameron had been Tory leader for two years. He'd embraced new issues like the environment and diversity and even "social justice"—new issues for Conservatives anyway. But in spite of all the changes and reforms and the aggressive outreach to both elite and lower middle class voters, the party appeared no closer to ousting the Labour government. Conservatives had last won a national election in 1992, and then only in a squeaker.

The wilderness years had been painful, beginning with a blowout in the 1997 election, the worst Conservative defeat since 1832. The Conservative share of the vote—31 percent in 1997—had barely increased in the 2001 (32 percent) and 2005 (33 percent) elections. Only once had Conservatives pulled ahead of Labour in an opinion poll. That was during a truckers' strike in 2000. The lead vanished in a week.

The quartet of issues adored by the party's base—skepticism about ceding power to the European Union, tax cuts, curbs on immigration, crime—tended to reinforce the conventional wisdom about Conservatives. They were, as Cameron adviser Steve Hilton puts it, in a "negative place," seen by a majority of British voters as out of touch and not very nice besides.

A coaster printed by the Conservative party mocking Gordon Brown's lackluster premiership. In British slang, a 'bottler' is a person prone to failing when he's expected to succeed.

Tories talked openly of the need to "decontaminate" or "detoxify" the party brand. Cameron, a former advertising executive with a gift for oratory and marketing, had already improved the party's image. "The country's not enamored of the Tories, but they don't hate them anymore," said Janet Daley, a political columnist for the *Daily Telegraph*.

The worst Tory nightmare had a name: Tony Blair. He had moved the Labour party toward the political center and stolen nearly all the Tory issues, except what John Hayes, a Conservative member of parliament, calls "financial self-interest." Conservatives "were up against a superb political tactician almost designed by a skilled set of geneticists to be a thoroughbred politician who could capture Tory votes," says Michael Gove, a Conservative MP and Cameron adviser.

When Blair stepped down in June 2007 and Gor-

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don Brown, who'd been Chancellor of the Exchequer for a decade, became prime minister, things got no better. Brown had a reputation as a serious, honest, straightforward leader who'd kept the British economy strong. He was the opposite of the glib Blair, whose star had finally begun to fade.

Brown's first months in office were a honeymoon. He made the best of it by handling three crises skillfully: a flood, a new outbreak of foot and mouth disease, and a botched terrorist attack on the Glasgow airport. Given his success, he was expected to call an election in the fall. In fact, the Labour party apparatus was preparing for one. And Brown and Labour were viewed as all but certain to win and remain in power until 2013.

Then, against all likelihood and with no warning, the tipping point came. Suddenly, everything changed in British politics, this time in the Conservatives' favor. By the end of the Tory conference in October, Cameron's gloom had dissolved and the Conservatives were on a roll. Within a few days, Brown decided against calling an election, a move that caused Labour's support to collapse and gave Conservatives a further boost.

The breakthrough at the party conference came with the speech by George Osborne, Cameron's chief deputy and chancellor in the shadow cabinet. Osborne talked about tax cuts, a subject Cameron had been avoiding. "I've heard it suggested that in my first budget I am going to tax people who go to the supermarket," Osborne said. "What do you think I am? Off my trolley?" When he declared the next Conservative government would abolish the inheritance tax on estates of less than £1 million (around $2 million), the audience erupted joyfully. It was "electrifying . . . a lightning strike," says Janet Daley. It marked what's been dubbed the "rebalancing" of the Conservative message, the joining of the old Tory issues with Cameron's new agenda.

That was followed by Cameron's speech on "why I want to lead our country." He discarded his prepared text. "I am afraid it is going to be a bit longer and I haven't got an autocue and I haven't got a script," he said. "I've just got a few notes, so it might be a bit messy but it will be me." The speech, in one sense, was a reprise. Cameron's stirring, off-the-cuff address to the 2005 Conservative conference had led to his victory in the race for party leader.

Cameron discarded his prepared text at the party conference. 'I am afraid it is going to be a bit longer and I haven't got an autocue and I haven't got a script,' he said. 'I've got a few notes, so it might be messy but it will be me.'

Above: Cameron delivers his speech at Blackpool in October 2007.

REUTERS

Before last October's conference, the Tories had trailed Labour by roughly 11 points in opinion polls. Following Brown's announcement of no election in 2008, they jumped ahead by 5 points. It had been a historic week, and there was better yet to come.

On May 1, in local elections across England, Wales, and Scotland, Conservatives dealt Labour its worst defeat in 40 years. They captured 44 percent of the national vote to 24 percent for Labour, an astonishing margin of victory that far exceeded expectations. Labour ran behind the third party, the Liberal Democrats, who got 25 percent.

Conservatives not only made significant inroads in Wales and in the north of England, Labour's strongholds, but Boris Johnson, a flamboyant Tory MP who'd been editor of the right-wing *Spectator* magazine from 1999 to 2005, was elected mayor of London, ousting leftist "Red Ken" Livingstone. And last week, Labour lost one of its supposedly safest seats in a special election in East Glasgow.

The Conservative advantage over Labour now hovers around 15 percentage points in polls. Holding that lead until the next election in 2010 won't be easy. "We're victims of our success," Osborne told me. But Conservatives have new issues to talk up. They've claimed the education and anti-poverty agendas as their own, plus aggressive welfare reform. Just as important, they've become the party of change. Steve Hilton, a PR specialist who's known Cameron for years, characterized this more personally. "Dave is the change," he says.

The Conservatives in Britain are, like the Republicans in America, a right of center party. The parties differ on numerous issues, but what chiefly distinguishes them at the moment is the politi-

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cal situations they face. Conservatives have the political cycle working in their behalf. The saying in Britain is that "oppositions don't win elections, governments lose elections." And Brown's government is tottering. Republicans face a resurgent Democratic party. They're where Tories were a decade ago.

I think there are lessons in the Conservative recovery that Republicans should pay attention to. What worked in Britain may work in America—probably a lot of it. Here are some of the lessons.

■ *It takes time.* Many Republicans believe all that's required for a robust rebound is a failed Barack Obama presidency. So in 2010, assuming Obama defeats John McCain this November, Republicans will be back on track, fully recovered or close to it. I don't think so, and no one I recently talked to in England about the recovery process thinks so either. "You can't hurry it," says Peter Riddell of the *Times*, who covered America in the 1980s. Republicans have lost one election and have yet to come to grips with the reasons why. They're not ready to bounce back.

"There were things we had to work out of our system," says Michael Gove, a brilliant political innovator responsible for many of the new Tories' best ideas and a popular politician described by the *Economist* as "ferociously charming." (He is.) For instance, it took two more sweeping election defeats—in 2001 and 2005—for the Tories to conclude their old issues (taxes, etc.) didn't work so well anymore. "If you mentioned them at all, given the skeptical press, they'd say it's the same old Tories back again," Gove says.

Conservatives also had to find a way to concentrate on new issues while, in Gove's words, "preventing the core [of the party] from flaking off." They managed this, despite grumbling from the conservative base about Cameron's emphasis on quality-of-life issues. But Cameron had room to maneuver. Conservatives were desperate to win and believed he gave them the best chance of winning. Republicans aren't that desperate yet.

Cameron has taken socially liberal positions and aims to be inclusive. He publicly congratulated his colleague Alan Duncan on his civil union with a male partner and put a Muslim woman in the shadow cabinet.

Above: A Muslim teaching assistant works with pupils at Millfields Community School in London.

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■ *It's not about ideology. It's about you.* This lesson is fundamental. "The problem was with Conservatives, not with conservatism," says Tory pollster Rick Nye. Daniel Finkelstein, the chief editorial writer of the *Times* and formerly a Cameron adviser, told me a particularly revealing anecdote about this problem. When foreign secretary Robin Cook left his wife for another woman in 1997, a poll found that a majority of Brits assumed Cook was a Conservative since his behavior was bad. He, of course, was a well-known Labourite. Another example: A question about an issue was asked twice in a poll, with the only difference being Conservatives were identified with the issue the second time. Support fell 30 percent.

At the party conference in 2002, an MP named Theresa May made a memorable comment. "You know what some people call us," she said. "The nasty party." That hurt, but few disputed it. Many voters had grown to loathe Conservatives and weren't willing to listen to them. Conservatives, unfairly or not, were identified with racism, anti-immigrant bigotry, homophobia, lack of equality for women, and dislike of anyone outside their social milieu. "You had to fix the brand before you could move forward on issues," says Nye.

Cameron has pretty much fixed it. His favorite word is "modern," as in "the modern Conservative party." Naturally he and his advisers are known as "modernizers," the more persistent of them as "ultra-modernizers." Cameron began to talk incessantly about the environment and global warming. Why? The issue is "a symbol of modernity," according to Hilton. Cameron vowed

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that half the Tory candidates in the next election would be women. (Actually, about 30 percent will be.) He's taken socially liberal positions. Just two weeks ago, he publicly congratulated a member of his shadow cabinet, Alan Duncan, on his civil union with a male partner. The party aims to be inclusive. He put a Muslim woman in his shadow cabinet. Cameron understands "the big tent thing," says Tim Montgomerie, creator of the influential Tory website ConservativeHome.com.

■ *'Broader ground.'* When I met with Hayes and Gove, Hayes leaned across the table and said those two words were the key to rebuilding the Conservative party, and the Republican party, too. This has become Tory dogma: The broader the party's reach of issues, the broader its appeal. A related idea, now a Conservative mantra, is that you have to talk to voters about what they're interested in, not what you are. Cameron dealt swiftly with the belief that Conservatives had, in Gove's words, "a secret agenda to tear up the [National Health Service]." Cameron talked about spending nights at the hospital with his disabled son and how he'd come to respect NHS professionals.

Iain Duncan Smith, an MP and former Tory leader, has taken on the issue of poverty. Gove has fashioned a bold school choice agenda to create hundreds of new schools run by parents, businessmen, or nearly anyone who could bring together a group of people committed to running a school. Conservatives now emphasize support for families and especially marriage. Cameron recently said traditional morality must be defended, not avoided out of fear of hurting someone's feelings or appearing judgmental. Otherwise, Britain will become a "demoralized society."

The Tories have developed new issues like welfare reform and school choice. They now emphasize support for families and especially marriage. Cameron recently said traditional morality must be defended, not avoided out of fear of hurting someone's feelings or appearing judgmental.

Above: Two homeless men in Hackney.

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■ *Don't ignore elites.* The inclination of Conservatives and Republicans is to appeal to working class voters and give up on educated elites. Certainly the "respectable" working class—primarily suburban women and *Daily Mail* readers—is politically important. Margaret Thatcher had the knack for reaching these voters. Ross Douthat and Reihan Salam's new book, *Grand New Party*, sensibly urges Republicans, first and foremost, to connect with working-class whites.

Cameron didn't give up on elites, quite the contrary. The most influential media institution in Britain, indeed in the world, is the British Broadcasting Company (BBC). Cameron wooed BBC officials and gave special attention to the elite newspapers, the *Guardian* and the *Times*. "If Cameron can neutralize the anti-Conservative media, he stands a good chance of winning a majority," says Daniel Johnson, editor of the new monthly magazine *Standpoint*. He's largely succeeded in it. Conservatives are no longer treated as pariahs.

■ *Co-opt liberal ends and capture liberal jargon.* Republicans already know how to do this, though they may have forgotten. George W. Bush taught them about it with his adoption of the word "compassion," formerly owned by liberals. Tories still admire Bush's "compassionate conservatism." The Policy Exchange, a center-

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right think tank, is now developing the idea of "compassionate economics." Conservative social policies consist of using conservative means to achieve progressive ends. In fighting poverty and antisocial behavior, Conservatives found they lost the argument if they championed "traditional values" against "social liberalism." Favoring "social responsibility" doesn't help much either. Philippa Stroud suggested they swipe the phrase "social justice" and fill it with conservative content. That works. This made sense because she's executive director of the Centre for Social Justice, another center-right think tank. For Conservatives, pilfering liberal notions is payback. As prime minister, Blair was adept at stealing conservative themes.

■ *Social psychology.* The idea of "nudging," rather than coercing, has become enormously popular with Tories. The concept comes from two University of Chicago professors, Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein, who published a book entitled *Nudge* a few months ago. It's the domestic equivalent of using soft power in foreign affairs. "A nudge," the authors write, "alters people's behavior in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives." George Osborne, Cameron's deputy, is a nudge enthusiast. He's eager to use nudges, for instance, to keep people from using credit cards too frequently. "Our work with the world's leading behavioural economists and social psychologists is yet more proof that the Conservative party is now the party of ideas in British politics," Osborne boasted in the *Guardian*. In any case, Republicans might consider the idea.

■ *You need a leader.* This will be a problem for Republicans if McCain doesn't win the presidency. The party will be decentralized and lack a national leader. Even if McCain wins, he may have little interest in working to revive his party. "A big repositioning exercise takes a big leader," says Andrew Cooper, a pollster and one of Cameron's "modernizers." Conservatives went through three leaders, under whom the party languished, before Cameron took over. It's helped that Cameron and his cohort are young. He's 41. Osborne is 37, Gove is 40, Boris Johnson is 44, shadow defense minister Liam Fox is 46.

As opposition leader, Cameron competes face-to-face for 30 minutes with the prime minister in the weekly question time in the House of Commons. He does well, though competing against Brown is a breeze compared with facing Blair. At the final question time of the summer, Brown cut short a Labour member who was blaming British economic problems on foreign countries. Cameron responded without hesitation. "It's a wonderful thing," he said. "You don't have to finish a planted question to get a planted answer."

■ *Forget slogans.* Conservatives attached themselves to some atrocious ones. In 1997, their slogan was "New Labour, New Danger." Labour won in a landslide. Also in 1997, they tried this: "You Can Only Be Sure with the Conservatives." In 2005, they used "Are You Thinking What We're Thinking?" Voters weren't. When he won the contest for party leader, Cameron's slogan was "Change to Win." That's not bad. Then while stressing environmental concerns, he adopted the slogan, "Vote blue. Go green." This year Conservatives have talked about "sharing the proceeds of growth" between tax cuts and spending increases. But with the economy in a slowdown, there may not be much growth or proceeds to share.

When Labour lost in the East Glasgow by-election last week, Cameron quickly called for a national election this year. "What I wonder is whether we can really put up with this for another 18 months," he said. "I think we need an election. We need change in this country."

Brown is unlikely to comply, but what if he did and Conservatives won? What would a Tory government actually do? Douglas Murray, who runs the Centre for Social Cohesion, worries that the Conservative party of opposition would not be a conservative party once it took power. That's a reasonable concern. Conservatives are inclined to downgrade foreign policy, except to guard against EU power grabs. And their hands may be tied on taxes and spending by the declining economy and compromises they've already made.

It's on social policy where Conservatives have staked their claim to be agents of radical change, and indeed they may be. The plan to lift the government's monopoly on schools is bolder than anything that's been tried in America. The use of civic organizations and other non-government outfits in an anti-poverty crusade should take Britain well beyond Bush's faith-based initiative. And Cameron, who's been talking up marriage since his first speech as Conservative leader, could hardly back away from his proposal to reward married couples with special benefits. Also, the Conservative plan for welfare reform matches what America did in the 1990s.

If Conservatives could pull off all or most of the social agenda—and that's a big "if"—Britain would become a different place. And not just Republicans here, but political leaders everywhere would look to Britain again for lessons to learn and policies to copy. ♦

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Scared Sober

Another way to waste taxpayers' money and schoolchildren's time

By Katherine Mangu-Ward

Every spring, just around prom time, dead bodies and crumpled cars litter America's suburban streets. Full-scale emergency response teams swarm around the accident sites, complete with helicopters, ambulances, and the occasional hearse. Police officers visit high school classrooms to break the news about classmates' lives tragically cut short by drunk drivers. Parents weep.

But if you happen upon any such scenes on the side of the road, it's pretty likely that everyone is faking it for the cameras. It's all part of the Every 15 Minutes program.

Since 1995, thousands of high school students across the country have been subjected to this educational opportunity, which operates on the "scared straight" principle of drunk driving prevention.

In most schools, Every 15 Minutes takes the form of a theatrical happening stretched out over two days. A student dressed as the Grim Reaper arrives and chooses a classmate for death. The Reaper then returns every 15 minutes to take another "life" in order to emphasize the (completely dubious) statistic from which the program takes its name—on average, they claim, someone is killed every 15 minutes in an alcohol-related accident. The "dead" students are decked out in white face makeup and black T-shirts (available in poly/cotton mix with a Grim Reaper logo for only $6.25 at every15minutes.com!). They walk among the living, but aren't allowed to talk to anyone for the rest of the day, which many high school students may actually consider a fate worse than death.

The Every 15 Minutes logo

Dean Wilson, a community relations officer for the Bethlehem Township, Pennsylvania, police department has been helping bring Grim Reapers and bloody jalopies to schools nationwide since the mid-1990s. He now runs the national organization. The Every 15 Minutes website shows 119 schools officially registered with the national organization this spring, but that figure captures only a fraction of the students carted off to early graves, since many (perhaps most) schools put on knock-off versions without official sanction—and without paying Every 15 Minutes' fees. The program is not officially affiliated with Mothers Against Drunk Driving, but MADD members frequently participate, offering testimonials and other conventional finger-wagging support services. Police involved with the widely popular, questionably effective anti-drug education program D.A.R.E. often organize Every 15 Minutes events in their districts—Officer Wilson, for instance, is also Bethlehem's D.A.R.E. officer. And who pays for all this bounty? Why, taxpayers, of course, primarily via small grants from the would-be reformers at state and local highway departments, offices of public safety, fire departments, and city councils.

This spring at El Camino High School in Oceanside, California, the program took a new tack. The tragicomical Grim Reaper was tossed out, and the accident victims simply failed to turn up at their homerooms one Monday morning. Police officers showed up in 20 classrooms, placed red roses on missing students' chairs, and

IMAGES FROM EVERY15MINUTES.COM

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announced the deaths of a popular athlete and other Big Men (and women) on campus. The student body wasn't clued in to the fact that their "dead" classmates were really just holed up in a seminar room, trying out beer-goggling simulations and writing letters to their parents full of fake self-flagellation for fake drinking and driving. Many students got understandably upset.

Word spread pretty fast, thanks to the contemporary form of note passing: text messaging. Some of the teachers had to calm hysterical students with the truth—their classmates were alive and well—but a significant portion of the student body didn't find out the facts until an assembly was called and the traffic accident was "reenacted." Needless to say, many were not amused.

The "reenactment" is a standard part of the program, and it is often supplemented with a video the following day showing the fictional events leading up to the crash, as well as the medical and emotional aftermath. Some of the videos are professional productions, but often they are the work of students, which lands them straight on YouTube.

This means that not only are suburban streets knee-deep in fake gore, the online video-sharing site is thick with faux corpses, too. The musical scores tend to maudlin alternative rock, and the students playing the stereotyped roles of Promising Young Athlete, Party Girl, and Honor Student show themselves willing and able to chew scenery. A quick YouTube search reveals videos from high schools in Pittsburgh, Sacramento, and even one from this year's El Camino program.

The Every 15 Minutes website offers an array of promotional products, most of which are graced with the image of a girl with her head in her hands. It's no accident that she's the mascot: The entire point of this exercise is to capitalize on the deep love of drama in the heart of every teenager. As a high school student when Kurt Cobain shot himself, I can tell you that the capacity for ostentatious mourning in the teenage soul knows almost no bounds. And what teenager hasn't longed to pull off a Tom Sawyer—hiding under the bed and listening to all of the people who had treated him badly fall all over themselves in an orgy of grief and recrimination, believing him dead in a tragic accident? It's no wonder that kids get enthusiastic about the Every 15 Minutes program while it's happening.

But there's an inherent problem with the fake drunk-driving accident staged by melodramatic do-gooder teens. Assuming that virtually all of the trusted authority figures in your life aren't lying to you about the deaths of your friends, if you have even the smallest degree of self-awareness, it's tough to take this kind of propaganda seriously. Especially when the class clown comes in decked out as the Grim Reaper and "kills" the girl everyone knows he has a crush on.

There's an inherent problem with a fake drunk-driving accident staged by melodramatic do-gooder teens. If you have even the smallest degree of self-awareness, it's tough to take it seriously when the class clown comes in decked out as the Grim Reaper and 'kills' the girl everyone knows he has a crush on.

In Cathedral City, just a stone's throw from El Camino High, the "students were very somber, very respectful," Vice Principal Art Sanchez told the *Desert Sun*, a Palm Springs newspaper. But Veronica Cain, the substance abuse coordinator at the Ontario City Schools in Ohio, told the *Mansfield News Journal* she had to remind the "dead" students to "stay somber"—presumably in addition to reminding them to stay sober.

Valiant efforts by teachers and police aside, it seems that all the fake blood in the world wouldn't make much of a dent. A 2000 study that appeared in the *American Journal of Health Studies* concluded that the program lacked long-term effectiveness: "Data does not show a measurable improvement in self-reported behavior toward drinking and driving." A 2003 study out of California State University, Chico—the city where one of the first Every 15 Minutes programs in America was staged in 1996—also conceded that there were few long-term effects, but found one significant short-term impact: "Students participating in the program as the 'living dead' characters reported drinking less, being more likely to talk to their friends about drinking and driving, and being less likely to drive after drinking or

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ride with someone who had been drinking." In other words, the tiny subset of people who were most directly involved told researchers—who had no way to corroborate their claims—that immediately after the program they were slightly better behaved than before.

This jibes with the experience of Mike Thompson, who "died" 10 years ago at Richard Montgomery High School in Rockville, Maryland. "I think it did make an impression," he says. And then, after a pause, "At least, it did right afterward. It's hard to say how long these things work." Much of the day is lost in the mists of the past, but Thompson does recall one detail: The soundtrack of the crash video was Radiohead's "Karma Police." Now a schoolteacher himself, Thompson tells me that he would never do the Every 15 Minutes program with his students—but that's because he teaches in the Bronx, where no one drives.

The reason for upping the ante with programs like the one at El Camino is a feeling that the message is no longer getting through. "This younger generation is rejecting the message," said John F. Sullivan, the project coordinator of Erie County's Stop DWI program, to the *Buffalo News*. But Thompson thinks his generation wasn't especially somber, or sober, for that matter: He remembers kids joking around, trying to make the dead student laugh or talk, like tourists with the Buckingham Palace guards.

Part of the reason the message may be getting rejected is the program's ridiculous packaging. On the "Products" link of the Every 15 Minutes website, some of the items are tagged in all caps as being "A GREAT GIFT." For example, *The Ethan Chronicles* by Marsha A. Willis, a book in which a "Family's Greatest Tragedy Poignantly Addressed," is billed as "A GREAT GIFT FOR ANYONE WHO HAS LOST A CHILD—$14.95." And, if you are one of those people who has lost a child and receives the GREAT GIFT of this book, an "Every 15 Minutes" postcard ("great for Thank You cards, Invitations, etc.") might be just the thing for expressing your gratitude.

The 2003 Cal State Chico study concluded with the hopeful thought that "one of the goals of the program is to prevent alcohol related driving mishaps during prom and graduation months, so short term intervention may be successful." But the significant majority of alcohol-related deaths are caused by people in their 20s and 30s, so long-term effectiveness is probably the only way to make a real difference. Thompson, for instance, says a couple of the friends he went through the program with were involved in drunk-driving accidents in their 20s.

Missouri's Greene County DWI Task Force wanted data before sponsoring the program for the third time, and so came the 2000 study. Interestingly, the task force didn't decide to scrap the program even after a systematic look demonstrated that the whole thing was bunk—perhaps because a DWI Task Force without a task is like a monkey without a tail. Instead, they modified the program and started pushing for tougher legal sanctions for drunk drivers. According to the study's authors, "the consensus of the Greene County DWI Task Force was that the public discussion of the study results along with media attention for the 'Every 15 Minutes' program did increase public awareness of the teen DWI problem."

Not that this small awareness-raising benefit comes cheap. A version staged at Middlesex High School in New Jersey cost about $6,000, plus the time of 60 people from local law enforcement and rescue crews, including a state Medevac helicopter that landed on the football field to transport dying student Tiffany Thornton to the hospital, according to the *Newark Star-Ledger*. In Cathedral City, police helicopters flew overhead as the local high school enacted their own version of the Every 15 Minutes program, complete with real firefighters, an ambulance, and a hearse. No one mentions two lost days of actual academic instruction.

There are small grants available through the Every 15 Minutes Foundation for participating schools. With all that donated time and resources, what do the schools need money for? Why, for the "T-Shirts, Lanyards, Silicone Wristband, postcards, materials . . . and other items directly related to the operation and presentation of the Every 15 Minutes program." The grant application includes this stern reminder: "Items purchased

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with these funds shall not be used to generate any program income." All the items are available on the Every 15 Minutes website. (Embroidered Grim Reaper polo "fine-weaved twill with reinforced needlework around the neck" now on sale for $25!)

The dead students numbered 26 at El Camino High because hearing about a dead kid secondhand doesn't deliver the kind of dramatic scare that having a dead kid in your homeroom will. Had those 26 deaths been real, they would have constituted a full 1.6 percent of total drunk-driving deaths for the 16- to 20-year-old age group for the year. (The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reported 1,648 drunk-driving deaths for that age group in 2006.)

But details like these don't matter when there are important lessons to be taught. The point isn't to provide accurate information, it's to scare the bejesus out of a bunch of impressionable kids. Even the name of the program reflects this ethos of being fast and loose with facts, figures, and teenagers' feelings. Using the most generous possible government figures, alcohol-related accidental deaths involving a vehicle have held steady at about 17,000 per year, or one death every 30 minutes, for the entire history of the program. And that figure includes accidents where blood alcohol levels were as low as .01, which is not even a ticketable offense in most states (1,500 of those deaths are also cases where the only person drunk at the scene was a bicyclist or pedestrian).

Public awareness campaigns have kids convinced that having sex even once without a condom is tantamount to a death sentence and that a single joint will set you on a long, downward spiral of drug addiction and financial ruin. Drink a beer with dinner and it's inevitable that you will get behind the wheel and kill a promising young honor student.

In fact, it's hard to imagine how kids could be more freaked out than they already are. Various public awareness campaigns have kids convinced that having sex even once without a condom is tantamount to a death sentence, and that a single joint will set you on a long, downward spiral of drug addiction and financial ruin. The University of Michigan's well-respected Monitoring the Future survey found that last year more than 18 percent of high school seniors believed "smoking marijuana once or twice" posed a "great risk" to their physical or perhaps mental health. Drinking a beer with dinner and then getting behind the wheel? Forget about it. It's almost inevitable that you will kill a promising young honor student (though, of course, the driver will live, with only a cinematic cut above the eyebrow and a lifetime of guilt and shame to bear).

"When someone says to me, 'Oh, my God, you're traumatizing my children,' I'm telling them, 'No, what I'm doing is waking them up,'" California Highway Patrol officer Eric Newbury, who orchestrates the program at his local high schools, told the *San Diego Union-Tribune*. But wide-awake students are already convinced they're living in a nightmarish world—they don't need to see a "fake arm lying in a pool of blood," like the one students at Cathedral City High School were treated to, in order to convince them that the world is a dangerous place. And while drunk driving is a serious problem, high school students aren't the worst offenders, not by a long shot. The reason fake high school drunk-driving accidents are necessary is that they're mercifully rare in reality—something teenagers know on a gut level, which gives them immunity against even the most overproduced propaganda.

So why keep at it? One might be forgiven for thinking that the police and teachers are a little too invested in continuing to traumatize their charges. "I want them to be an emotional wreck. I don't want them to have to live through this for real," says Newbury. El Camino's guidance counselor Lori Tauber echoes his sentiments: "They were traumatized, but we wanted them to be traumatized." ♦

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The historic Timbuktu mosque

NIK WHEELER / CORBIS

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Moderate Islam, African-style

Meet the beer-swilling Muslims of Mali.

By Willy Stern

Bamako, Mali

On a Thursday night at the trendy Amandine Fast Food restaurant in Bamako, hip Malian women wear stylish blue jeans and tight, cleavage-revealing blouses. There isn't a burkha in sight. Their male buddies are chugging Castel beer and, yes, a plate of ham sandwiches. When pressed, they say that George W. Bush is a decent, if simple, sort of bloke.

These are Malians. They live in a functioning democracy, are unbridled (if pesky) capitalists, and wonder if Osama bin Laden is deranged. Their countrymen stick American flags everywhere, notably on the mud-flaps of taxis that zip crazily around their impossibly crowded and pothole-strewn streets.

They're dirt poor—Mali's per capita income of $380 ranks among the lowest on this planet. Seventy percent of them can't read the newspaper. Average life expectancy is the wrong side of 50. As one local government official explains—after diplomatically asking this visiting scribe for $25 to conduct the interview—"If you get sick here, you die." Yet despite their hardscrabble existence, they are hospitable, open, and friendly—and proud. They meet you as a peer.

Did I mention that around 90 percent of these folks are Muslims? Welcome to moderate Islam, African-style. So much for the silly leftist babble that radical Islam springs from poverty and ignorance. If so, Mali, a backward, resource-poor, and landlocked nation of 12.5 million people in West Africa, ought to be the dream enlistment post of every al Qaeda recruiter out hustling the new generation of militant killers. It ain't.

That isn't to say that al Qaeda doesn't give it the old college try. Mali's northern half—about the size of Texas—is the lawless Sahara. Make no mistake: There is an al Qaeda offshoot roaming around in that vast and inhospitable stretch of sand. These terrorists call themselves "Al Qaeda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb." Actually, everybody in this former French colony refers to these Muslim extremists as AQIM; split into three or four splinter groups in the Sahara, they number around 150 adherents all told. They've learned how to kidnap tourists for hefty ransoms and how to employ IEDs to murder innocents, skills they apparently picked up in Iraq.

AQIM—ragtag bunch though it might appear—has become Mali's problem. But the members aren't Malians. No surprise, they're Arabs—Libyans, Algerians, and the like. The only Malians involved, say military sources, are drivers looking for easy cash in a region where owning three camels makes you rich. Nonetheless, the Bush administration made a reasonable decision that the Sahara of today ought not become the Afghanistan of 2000. No terrorist training camps, thank you.

Enter the U.S. Army. Regular contingents of Special Forces—all seemingly wearing wraparound Ray-Ban sunglasses—regularly swoop down into Mali on C-130 planes. They're on short-term missions to train the well-meaning, if still green, Malian soldiers in how to find and kill terrorists. (Our soldiers' orders don't allow them to shoot at the bad guys themselves.)

To be certain, some are troubled by aspects of the United States' focused counterterrorism strategy in Mali. Take a former U.S. ambassador to Mali, Robert Pringle, a career Foreign Service officer. After leaving the State Department, Pringle in 2006 penned a generally thoughtful treatise on "Democratization in Mali." But among his conclusions was this: America's counterterrorism efforts in the Sahara are "sometimes unduly influenced by shallow, worst-case analysis of Islamist potential."

Among the Malian officials who believe Pringle's analysis might be a tad shallow is Colonel Younoussa Maiga, commander of the Malian army forces in Timbuktu. The amiable colonel keeps an American flag perched on his desk. Timbuktu has become a sad met-

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Colonel Younoussa Maiga, commander of the Malian army in Timbuktu

aphor for Islam's inability to adapt to a changing world. In the 16th century, Timbuktu was a bustling center of Islamic scholarship, where leading theologians and legal minds gathered. Today, it's a village at the edge of the desert with heaps of donkeys and little in the way of schools or plumbing.

Thanks to Colonel Maiga's soldiers and American satellite technology, terrorists don't dare show their faces in Timbuktu; they lurk in the desert to the north while Japanese and French tourists snap photos of Timbuktu's picturesque mosque. Colonel Maiga sends regular patrols out to try to disrupt the terrorists. Just like the bad guys they chase, the Malian soldiers ride around in Toyota Land Cruisers.

AQIM pays for its vehicles with profits from drug and cigarette smuggling operations, as well as insidious trafficking in humans and guns. Colonel Maiga's ragged fighting contingent is so strapped for cash that his soldiers carry ancient Soviet-made AK-47 assault rifles left over from Lord knows when. Doing its best to level the playing field, the U.S. Army has donated Land Rovers and other much-needed items to Colonel Maiga's forces. No surprise, a visiting journalist with an American passport is welcomed as a minor celebrity on the Timbuktu army post.

Meanwhile, virtually all Malians live in the southern part of the country, many near the Niger River. Most Malians have never heard of AQIM and could not care less about Osama bin Laden and his nutty devotees. Largely subsistence farmers using primitive hand tools, they're too busy trying to find their next meal or stave off malaria.

These are honest people. A street vendor hawking cell phones can leave his stall unattended for lunch and be confident all his wares will be there upon his return. And Malians get along. There are dozens of ethnic groups in the country—most speaking different languages and with varying skin tones. They developed a complex and sophisticated system centuries ago for coexisting peacefully. This system—based on mutual interdependence and humorous insults to erase tensions—still functions well today.

Toleration runs deep. General Gabriel Poudiogou, chief of the general staff of the Malian army, is a Christian. Nobody cares. At many Islamic schools, boys and girls study together; that's clearly not how it's done in the terrorist-training mills.

And Malians have been Muslims a long time—since the first millennium, in fact, when Arab traders arrived from Northern Africa. It's a peculiar, if ambivalent brand of Islam, to be sure. They are Sufis, from the mystical branch of Islam that encourages an individual relationship with God. Sufis are less prone to the herd behavior found among militant jihadists.

Rich or poor, they identify themselves as Malians first and foremost, not as Muslims. Not one of the nine fellows I watched the Germany-Spain finals of the Euro 2008 with even looked up from the black-and-white TV set when the call-to-prayer sounded over the ubiquitous loudspeakers. Still, many mosques do a brisk business. And to be fair, many Malians, particularly the rural ones, don't touch booze.

Malians reasonably think their politicians are crooks. Still, regular elections are held and the losers leave office peacefully. Petty corruption is a way of life; at Sofitel's luxury hotel in Bamako—owned by Muammar Qaddafi, of all people—Mali officials and other high rollers in $3,000 Italian suits cavort openly with high-priced Ghanaian prostitutes.

But that's nothing compared with how the top religious leaders make out. Take the case of Mali's most popular Muslim leader, Imam Ousame Chérif Haidara, who can fill a massive stadium with rapt admirers. The charismatic Haidara's housing compound dwarfs many in Beverly Hills. His fleet of cars includes a Hummer. His home video system boasts the latest Samsung 72″ flat-screen

PHOTOS: WILLY STERN

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At many Islamic schools in Mali, boys and girls study together.

HDTV (retail value $2,999). Meanwhile, he has congregants who dig through open fields of trash for morsels of food. (To be fair, many Malian imams have problems paying their electric bill.)

The well-heeled Haidara ends up being one of the good guys; he is among the vast majority of Sufi leaders preaching peaceful Islam in Mali today. Interestingly, a turf war is just getting underway between traditional, gentle Islam in Mali and the less tolerant forms that are exported primarily from Saudi Arabia and Iran. The Saudis are pouring money into Mali to support their Wahhabi brand of Islam.

The Iranians have also gotten into the game. They are dumping money into Malian mosques to tout the Shia brand. There's no way to trace Saudi and Iranian flows of funds into Mali since the money streams discreetly into sympathetic mosques through embassies, nongovernmental organizations, and cultural centers.

Imam Mahamadou Diallo, who presides over a smallish mosque in a rundown area of Bamako, explains that the Saudis will pay an imam $500 a month to do their bidding, while the Iranians pay about $400. This is huge money in Mali. Nonetheless, local observers believe that the Saudis and Iranians control only 3 to 5 percent of mosques in Mali, although the long-term trend toward radical Islam causes concern in some quarters.

That's where the U.S. government comes in, spreading its own largesse around Mali. USAID supported a bucketload of health and education projects with $40 million in grants last year. The Peace Corps has a huge program in Mali—around 120 volunteers at any given time. Other federal agencies perform scads of generous acts in Mali that build enormous good will. Most notable: the unheralded but effective Millennium Challenge Corp., a U.S. government initiative that aims to reduce poverty in the world's very poorest countries through sustainable economic growth.

Diplomats call this global effort "preventive diplomacy," though a better term might be soft counterterrorism. The idea is that the remote Malian village that has received free eye exams from a U.S. Army medic is going to be less receptive should Islamic militants show up a few weeks later. It works. Nobody with any sense, however, thinks that American aid or firepower is primarily responsible for peaceful Islam in Mali. That's a bit like crediting the flea on a dog's back for the canine's ability to fetch.

It's tempting to try to draw conclusions from Mali's tolerant live-and-let-live Islamic society. How can it be exported or duplicated? Are there lessons here for Saudi Arabia, Iraq, or even Detroit? Probably not. Malians have been practicing their own lovely, peaceful Islam for more than 1,000 years. Sadly, it appears to be a one-off deal. ♦

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Sir Walter Scott Monument, Edinburgh, ca. 1900

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

Scotland the Brave

Or the Foolish, as it ponders independence

BY ALAN COCHRANE

The Road to Independence?
Scotland Since the Sixties
by Murray Pittock
Reaktion, 224 pp., $24.95

The question asked by Murray Pittock in his title is the question that has been asked increasingly throughout my adolescent and adult life, to the extent that there is nowadays almost no other political question asked by—or posed to—Scottish voters. Even the English, in numbers undreamed of only a decade or so ago, find themselves considering seriously the option of the United Kingdom breaking up, to the extent that many in Britain's southern and vastly more populous kingdom now say to the Scots, with more than a hint of weariness and exasperation in their voices: "If independence is what you want, in the name of God, go."

How could the continuation of the United Kingdom, arguably the most successful union of two former enemies the world has ever seen, be threatened, as it most assuredly is today? After three centuries—301 years to be precise—the maintenance of the union between England and Scotland is no longer a given.

(The principality of Wales was seen as part of England when England and Scotland united their parliaments in the 1707 Treaty of Union, 104 years after the Union of the Crowns when Scotland's James VI succeeded Elizabeth and became England's James I. Ireland joined up in 1801 and then the 26 counties of the Free State, now the Republic, of Ireland went their separate way in 1922, leaving the six counties of Northern Ireland as still part of the United Kingdom.)

The root cause is almost certainly the fact that, for a great many people, being "British" doesn't mean anything in the 21st century. Just as I've seen people scribbling "USA," rather than the continental catch-all "American" in that part of hotel and other registers that ask for a declaration of nationality, so "Scottish" is the designation of choice for most of my compatriots when traveling abroad. (Interestingly,

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the 'B'-word is also more and more disliked by the English, too.) Scots, who used to be simply irritated when the terms English and British appeared to be interchangeable, now protest loudly.

Foreigners are perhaps most guilty of this confusion; they are easily forgiven as they know no better. But the London-based, and thus English-dominated, media are deemed to be the worst culprits. A recent independent report criticized the BBC for being too English, too concerned with what happens inside the M25 "Beltway" and for ignoring the Scots, Welsh, and Northern Irish. Another huge irritant is the media's often careless labeling. For instance, Jackie Stewart, a Scot, is deemed to be a "British" world champion Formula One star, but Nigel Mansell or Damon Hill, also F1 champs, are "English."

Young Scots—those in the 18-25 age group, which opinion polls suggest is where most support for the separatist case lies—don't see London as their capital city, but merely as another big city in another country. And it is no longer necessary for Scots to go through London to travel abroad, given that there are direct flights, now, from Scottish airports to virtually every part of the world. This may be a welcome bonus for holidaymakers and business travelers, but it militates against a feeling of Britishness; in fact, I'm often surprised how few and how infrequently young people of my acquaintance travel to London.

Loss of empire, too, has helped the separatists' cause. Scots were happy to subsume their nationality inside the British carapace if there were new lands to conquer (often literally) and vast tracts, on which the sun never set, to administer and govern, for the most part efficiently. The Scots' military tradition and their generally better standard of education meant that they were ideal colonial pacifiers, administrators, and, as in the case of Andrew Carnegie in the United States, Max Aitken (Lord Beaverbrook) in Canada, Rupert Murdoch (in Australia), and the Jardine Matheson clans in the Far East, successful entrepreneurs and merchant-venturers. But there are no geography classes nowadays, as there were in my schooldays, where much of the globe was colored pink—signifying allegiance to the British Empire or Commonwealth—to inspire enterprising Scots to further their ambitions beneath a British parasol under a blazing tropical sun.

The rapid downsizing of the Royal Navy, Royal Air Force, and British Army after two world wars left a bankrupt Britain only too eager to divest itself of its colonial responsibilities, and this has also impinged on the Scots' association with a British identity. A Scottish accent was virtually the only regional variation of Standard English tolerated—certainly in the officers' mess—in the armed services, but the historic Scottish regiments have been so amalgamated and abolished over the years that there is now only one left: the Royal Regiment of Scotland, even if its five regular battalions all still retain some of the famous old names, such as the Black Watch and the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.

Alex Salmond and constituent

JEFF J MITCHELL / GETTY IMAGES

Murray Pittock is the A.C. Bradley professor of literature at the University of Glasgow, and charts the changes, often dramatic, that have occurred within the constituent parts of the U.K. within the last half-century and does nothing to conceal his sympathy for the view that something has got to give, following the significant devolution of powers from Westminster to an Edinburgh parliament, as well as the lesser transfer to the Cardiff and Belfast assemblies, during the last decade.

That "something" is, of course, the English. They are everyone's villains. It is their numerical dominance in the British Isles that skews the relationships between the constituent parts, and it is their refusal to accept the changes that devolution has wrought, Pittock argues, that threatens ultimately the maintenance of the Union. Only some form of federal structure, he believes, will save the United Kingdom, a policy long advocated by the Liberal Democrat party—and also, incidentally, recently volunteered to me by a sympathetic (to my Unionist worries) visiting American politics student. However, this federal solution, says Pittock, may not arrive in time because the British (English) government "continues to act as if devolution hadn't happened."

I'm not so sure. The English generally get a bad press, not least by the Scots, and I have a great deal of sympathy for the patience they've shown in recent decades as the caterwauling from my countrymen has increased. The Labour and Liberal Democrat parties believed that devolution would buy off, or even finish, the nationalists. John Major, the last Tory premier, however, said that it was a recipe for

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"sleepwalking towards independence." Last May the Scots elected a nationalist administration in Edinburgh, and there's now no mystery as to whose analysis was correct.

The English have also shown remarkable tolerance—coming to an end, I'm bound to conclude—about public spending in Scotland at roughly $3,000 per capita per annum more than that spent in England, and about the fact that Scots members of the Westminster parliament can vote on English domestic issues (such as health and education) while English MPs, by virtue of the responsibilities of the Edinburgh parliament, have no influence over similar issues north of the border.

Nationalist politicians—that is, those who would break up the United Kingdom and set up a completely separate and independent Scotland—put their desire to be "free" of the supposed shackles of London rule at the heart of every policy. Thus, they say, Scotland would not be suffering from the current downturn in the world economy, or at least not as much as it is, because the Scots would have the benefit of "their" oil. The North Sea oil fields, discovered in the 1960s and developed in the succeeding four decades, are "Scottish" not "British," they say, and should be used for the benefit of Scots, not Britons, say the Nats—just as the Norwegians, on the other side of the North Sea from Scotland, have used their oil tax revenues to underwrite their public expenditure.

No longer, in such a circumstance of "freedom" from Westminster, says Alex Salmond, the leader of the Scottish National party and the first nationalist to hold the office of first minister in the nine years of devolution, would some Scots have to pay what are claimed as the highest pump prices in the world. In the Outer Hebrides, the archipelago off mainland Scotland's west coast, a gallon now costs the equivalent of $13, and it's still going up.

The same goes for business taxation. An independent Scotland would be modeled, at least in the economic sense, on the Republic of Ireland, where corporate tax is 12.5 percent, compared with the United Kingdom's (and hence Scotland's) 28 percent. That way Ireland's economic miracle of the last 15 years, creating the so-called "Celtic Tiger," could be matched by a Scottish "Celtic Lion." And if international companies with headquarters in London are thinking, as some are reputedly doing, of moving to Ireland, then why not to an independent Scotland?

No one disputes that Ireland's recovery has been fueled, in part at least, by her enthusiasm for European Union membership and the regional subsidies that have flowed therefrom. Why not Scotland, ask the nationalists? An independent Scotland could become the 28th member of the EU. The fact that the SNP has, as one of its main policy planks, withdrawal from the EU's Common Fisheries Policy, whose restrictions on deep-sea cod and herring fishing have systematically decimated the Scottish trawler fleet, is glossed over by the nationalists. Nevertheless, it is inconceivable that an independent Scotland would be granted entry if it tried to opt out of such a fundamental part of EU policy as the Common Fisheries Policy.

Salmond is riding high in the polls. His party has the most seats—47 out of 129—but no overall majority in the Scottish parliament. In spite of this handicap he reigns supreme over a shell-shocked and demoralized Labour party, which has lost control of Scotland for the first time in 50 years, and the largely irrelevant Scottish Tories. An experienced and skillful politician, he is cannily playing all the best cards—scrapping university tuition fees, ending bridge tolls, freezing local property taxes, saving local hospitals from closure, phasing out charges for prescription medicines—and all the while saying to the Scottish electorate: "Look how good it is now. Imagine how great we could be with complete independence."

He plans a referendum in 2010, and wants to make the question as bland as possible so as not to frighten the voters. If he gets his way there will be nothing on the ballot paper about Scotland being a "completely separate Country outside the United Kingdom"—which, in a recent opinion poll, attracted only 19 percent support. This state of affairs may be what his party has stood for since its birth in the 1930s, but, instead, he will merely ask for permission from the voters to begin discussions with the U.K. government to make Scotland independent.

Most interesting of all, at least to my mind, but not mentioned at all by the author in this book, is Salmond's attitude to the monarchy. He leads a party that, until recently, was often stridently republican in tone. No longer; he has a good working relationship with the queen, and he and other nationalist leaders have spent weekends with her majesty and the prince of Wales at their rural retreats in the Scottish Highlands. With a majority of Scots still favoring the continuation of the monarchy, Salmond has now pledged that Elizabeth Windsor would remain Queen of Scots after independence and that Scotland would retain its "social union" with England.

Professor Pittock has fairly accurately chronicled the road we've traveled in these islands, and is sympathetic to the aims and aspirations of those who wish a significant transformation in the relationship between the constituent parts of this Union. The fact that Alex Salmond was guest speaker at his book's official launch party may have been pure coincidence, or maybe not. But Pittock does ignore the bland—and to my mind disingenuous—assertions made by this accomplished politician. Instead of the United Kingdom, as presently constituted, Salmond says we'd have the United Kingdoms, bound together by the same monarch, by custom and practice and a shared love of the same TV soaps, but not by law or politics.

And so there we'd have it. After three centuries, says the nationalist first minister, this hugely successful union, whose empire once dominated the world, and whose influence still counts for something at the conference table, would be smashed asunder by the addition of the letter *s*.

Doesn't sound like much, now, does it? ♦

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Albert Schweitzer supervises an inoculation.

Marsh Fever

Now largely a tropical disease, malaria was once a global blight. **BY KEVIN R. KOSAR**

In 1881, the eminent Philadelphia publishing house Presley Blakiston began selling Joseph F. Edwards's *Malaria: What It Means and How Avoided*. In it, Edwards, an M.D. and author of other useful monographs, such as *Constipation Plainly Treated and Relieved Without the Use of Drugs*, complained that too many "incompetent physicians" attempting to hide their "want of penetration in diagnosis" had confused matters. The good doctor would set matters aright.

"I will define malaria for you," he promised, "and will furnish the definition in two words, BAD AIR." This blight on man's health was to be distinguished from another affliction, which he termed "intermittent fever," a mysterious affliction that caused dreadful spells of chills and fever. The cause of the latter was due to a "special, mysterious, unrecognized agent." Malaria's cause, however, was obvious—"Everything that has life, be it animal or vegetable, MUST DIE. Everything that dies MUST DECOMPOSE, and everything that decomposes MUST PRODUCE BAD AIR. . . . Therefore, it is self-evident that the surest way to avoid malaria is remove this matter from your presence while it is undergoing decomposition." Q.E.D.

The Making of a Tropical Disease
A Short History of Malaria
by Randall M. Packard
Johns Hopkins, 320 pp., $24.95

Dr. Edwards, for sure, was not the first person to misconstrue malaria's nature. For at least two millennia scientists, naturalists, and others had gotten it wrong, blaming angry gods, unbalanced humors, and swamp gas. Indeed, as Edwards's example shows, even the best informed could not agree on the affliction's causes, or even its name. Malaria is the accepted nomenclature today, but in centuries past it has been called paludisme, swamp fever, and ague.

What all observers could agree on, though, was that malaria tended to occur in summer and autumn, and that it was—and still is—a god-awful pestilence. The afflicted may first feel minor symptoms, such as a headache and muscle pains. Then come horrendous chills, a skyrocketing fever, and pouring sweats. The spleen swells, anemia may set in, and the victim might fall comatose, in some cases with his limbs thrust out in frozen contortions. The fortunate evade death, but remain susceptible to reinfection throughout their lives.

Nobody was safe from it; malaria has killed millions, from the humblest field worker to eminent figures such as Alexander the Great, Pope Leo X, and Oliver Cromwell.

Discerning the causes of malaria required both technological advances and overcoming old ways of thinking about disease. Aided by microscopes and advances in medical science, researchers began to unravel the mystery of malaria. In 1880 French physician Charles Louis Alphonse Laveran discovered parasites (malaria plasmodium) in the blood of malaria victims. Around the fin de siècle, the British physician Ronald Ross found that the *Anopheles* mosquito could transmit malaria plasmodium from one bird to another, while the Italian researchers Giovanni Battista Grassi, Amico Bignami, and Giuseppe Bastianelli demonstrated that the same mosquito could spread this parasite from human to human.

Today, we have a pretty good grasp of the mechanics of malaria. The *Anopheles* mosquito carries the plasmodium parasite, which it passes on to humans when it bites them. Plasmodium quickly travels through the circulatory system to the liver, where it takes up residence in liver cells, and multiplies. After a week or two, the liver cells burst, sending the disease into the bloodstream. Thereafter, the buggers penetrate blood cells and multiply until these cells burst and scatter still more pestilence in the circulatory system. (This recurrent cycle of bursting red blood cells accounts for the waves of fever that the victim experiences.)

The immune system and spleen work mightily to kill off the infection, and some victims recover. Too often, though, the victim's body cannot keep up with the exponential reproduction of the parasite. Red blood cells die en masse, the organs fail for want of oxygen, and the victim convulses and dies.

Kevin R. Kosar is a writer in Washington.

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE / GETTY IMAGES

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Armed with this knowledge, mankind has taken the battle to malaria. Draining swamps and oiling stagnant pools reduces the breeding grounds for *Anopheles* mosquitoes. Sleeping under mosquito nets can keep individuals from being bitten, and spraying DDT and malathion has killed off zillions of mosquitoes. Chloroquine, artemsinin, and other medications can disrupt the parasite's reproduction, thereby helping victims' bodies to defeat the pathogen. Isolating the afflicted in medical facilities prevents mosquitoes from biting them and spreading plasmodium to others.

Mankind has won stunning battles against malaria. Worldwide deaths from malaria went from around 3.5 million per year in the 1930s to perhaps 1.25 million today. Brazil reduced its annual malaria cases more than 90 percent, from three million in the 1940s to fewer than 700,000 at the end of the 20th century. Many countries, in North America, Europe, and much of Asia, are malaria-free. The occasional case pops up in these nations—as it did in Palm Beach in 2003—but the disease fails to take hold and spread.

Malaria, as the title of Randall Packard's short, dense volume indicates, has become a tropical disease. Whereas it once ravaged areas as far north as New York City (killing 450 people in the same year that Edwards published his wrong-headed book) and Archangel, Russia, malaria is now limited to Central America, Southeast Asia, and Africa.

These successes, combined with the ugly havoc that malaria continues to wreak, may have helped spur the recent calls for renewing the battle against malaria. The World Health Organization launched its "Roll Back Malaria" initiative in 1998, and this past year the Gates Foundation announced its intention to spend billions of dollars to eradicate malaria worldwide.

But should we expect past performance to be indicative of future returns? On this question, *The Making of a Tropical Disease* is especially pertinent. Packard, who directs the Institute for the History of Medicine at Johns Hopkins, has not produced a history of malaria per se. Regrettably, the reader will not find a chronological narrative that starts with the ancient Vedic and Chinese writings on malaria, or one that recounts in detail malaria epidemics and their effects on war, peace, and the rise and fall of nations.

Rather, Packard yanks the reader into an ongoing public health debate. He piles up case studies to argue that

> The history of malaria has been driven by the interplay of social, biological, and environmental forces. The shifting alignment of these forces has largely determined the social and geographic distribution of the disease. . . . By contrast, efforts to control malaria . . . have been driven by a narrower vision of the disease and its causes that has privileged biological processes and focused on attacking anopheline mosquitoes and malaria parasites.

JAMES GATHANY / CDC

The result is a short book that reads long and tries the commitment of the general reader. That said, Packard's big point is a critical one. Malaria reduction and eradication have tended to be most successful in countries that were well on their way to being First World nation-states. The reasons for this are not hard to see. Modern nation-states have the wealth, power, and administrative competence to take the steps required to stop malaria. In the 1930s, the Tennessee Valley Authority used federal money and might to wipe out malaria: Marshes were drained, screens were installed in the windows of homes, medical facilities were established, DDT was sprayed, and the public was schooled on the causes and prevention of malaria. Malaria vanished in less than 20 years. (Around the same time, Italy similarly vanquished its infamously *Anopheles*-stricken Pontine Marshes.)

The results of this disparity are not hard to see, either. Today, if someone in, say, San Diego is suffering from chills and fever, he probably will head by car or ambulance to the nearest hospital where he'll immediately be diagnosed by trained medical personnel, given the correct drugs, kept in quarantine, and brought back to full health in short order.

In Zambia or Angola, today's malaria victim might be taken to a witch doctor who blames *djinni* and provides treatment that is useless at best. Or the afflicted might be carried for a few days to the nearest understaffed medical clinic, where he may be given watered-down medicines that kill the weakest plasmodia while leaving the strongest, most resistant, bacteria to propagate further. During his journey to and from the clinic, the victim may be bitten by more mosquitoes that will, in due course, spread the disease to others. Once home, the mosquito net provided by the clinic might end up being rigged up in a stream to catch fish rather than hung over his bed.

If that is not enough of an impediment to future progress in curbing malaria cases, there is also the matter of the plague itself. Initially, as Packard shows, mankind was able to score many fast victories against malaria because its attacks on the mosquito and the plasmodium were novel. With the passage of time, both organisms have responded to the assault, developing resistance to some medications and insecticides. There are at least 30 different malaria-carrying species of the *Anopheles* mosquito, each of which is evolving defenses.

Finally, there is the matter of climate and topography, key factors that Packard underplays. Temperature, humidity, and rainfall levels affect the ability of malaria to spread. Temperatures below 68 degrees Fahrenheit stunt the spread of the vicious *falciparum* species of plasmodium. Similarly, different parts of the earth are more favorable to the propagation of different species of *Anopheles* mosquitoes. *Anopheles gambiae*, a very efficient transmitter of malaria, breeds best in the environmental conditions found in the savannahs of sub-Saharan Africa. Not surprisingly, countries there

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are swarmed with *Anopheles gambiae* and deadly malaria cases. So, yes—malaria once clobbered Archangel's residents, but Zambia's inhabitants have suffered regularly for centuries.

All of which is to say that there is only so much man can do. First World efforts to economically and socially modernize Third World countries often fail. We cannot lower the temperature or reduce the rainfall in the tropical areas where malaria remains endemic. Regrettably, absent a miraculous medical breakthrough—the anti-plasmodium vaccine pursued by the Gates Foundation, and others—we can expect malaria to continue to afflict and kill people in tropical areas for the foreseeable future. ♦

Left Behind

An evangelical loses his faith but fails to gain insight.

BY MARK D. TOOLEY

Novelist and former "Sixty Minutes" producer John Marks was religiously "born again" at age 16, but later abandoned Christianity. He remains fascinated by religion and by religious people, but cannot persuade himself to return to their fold. *Reasons to Believe* is Marks's story of how he ostensibly became reconciled to his unbelief.

Reasons to Believe
One Man's Journey Among the Evangelicals and the Faith He Left Behind
by John Marks
HarperCollins, 384 pp., $26.95

Five years ago, he was helping Morley Safer film a story about the "Left Behind" series by evangelist Tim LaHaye, whose mega best-selling novels about the end times tell of those who are "left behind" when Jesus Christ raptures His church. Having returned to his native Dallas to interview a charismatic evangelical couple about their end-times theology, he was confronted directly by their question: "Will you be left behind?"

After 381 pages, we learn that, yes, Marks ultimately does expect to be left behind—if, in fact, such a "rapture" occurs. "I don't find Jesus Christ, as savior, to be a convincing or even compelling idea," he told the winsome evangelical couple in Dallas. By his own admission, Marks is a "pessimist, a hedonist, a committed, happy, straight-up pagan." But as a youth and young man, Marks had been like his evangelical interlocutors, shunning liquor, pre-marital sex, and profanity, while earnestly praying and reading his Bible every day.

Later in life, Marks became sexually active, tried marijuana, started drinking, and studied philosophy. He lost his evangelical faith but retained his belief in God, until losing even that when reporting on the horrors of the war in Bosnia during the 1990s. While retaining friendships with believers, Marks's politics swung left, and he for a time adopted an "irrational dread" of the Religious Right because of its "hatred of the world."

As a journalist in his thirties, married and a father, Marks somewhat overcame his dread and, instead, returned to a sense of fascination about religious people, especially evangelical Christians. In preparation for his book, and now in his early forties, he set out on a rediscovery of the evangelical world, traveling cross-country and spending hundreds of hours in mega-churches and Bible studies and Christian concerts. He discovered, and partly admires, a great ferment in America's religious life, as millions turn away from traditional churches towards non-denominational Christianity. Marks calls this revolution "one of the great American dramas of our time."

Having relocated to western Massachusetts from New York City after a job loss, Marks gained an intense interest in a nearby site where Mohawks and French soldiers massacred Puritan settlers in 1704. He particularly focuses on one survivor, the Rev. John Williams, who endured his captivity in Canada to write a hair-raising memoir, "The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion." Two of Williams's children were murdered in the attack, and his wife was slain during the march to Quebec.

The Reverend Williams found his consolation in the Book of Job. Marks is also intrigued by an ancient grave marker's inscription near the site: "Our fathers trusted in thee, they trusted and though didst deliver them." He believes this scriptural hope aptly describes American evangelicals who want to recapture America as a Christian nation.

Marks has pleasant memories of his own slice of Christian America. Raised in posh Highland Park encircled by Dallas, he believes his childhood more resembled the Eisenhower era than the actual years of the 1960s and '70s. The enormous Methodist church to which George and Laura Bush belong sits on a corner near Southern Methodist University. And Robert E. Lee's statue is located just south of Highland Park. Marks was an Eagle Scout, attended Sunday School, and played high school football in an estuary of American Protestant culture.

But his education and his profession snatched him way. As a college student his Christian faith began to fade. In West Germany during the mid-1980s, he demonstrated against U.S. missiles, wore a beret, stopped brushing his teeth, and spoke often of Nietzsche. While visiting Strasbourg, he fell to the floor of his hotel room and believed that Satan had "welled up inside" him. A subsequent backpacking trip became a "pilgrimage away from Christ."

"After I walked away from Jesus Christ, my life improved dramatically," Marks recounts. He married a non-devout Jew-

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ish woman, had a son, and pursued his vocation in journalism. His rejection of religion accelerated. While living in Berlin, he met an aging transvestite who had stood up against Nazi and Communist repression of sexual minorities. He wonders why this courageous friend cannot enter heaven, having shown more virtue against tyranny than many Christians had. Marks recalls that his rejection of God culminated in Bosnia.

By his own account, Marks never personally witnessed killing or atrocities. But he was overcome when he learned that a victim of ethnic cleansing was holding onto hope of his sons still being alive, when in fact, unbeknownst to him, they were dead. Marks did not have the heart to tell the man, but he wondered how a deity could preside over such tragedy.

Although Marks supposedly abandons all belief in God, his absorption with, at least, the theory of religion remains nearly obsessive. And this book is his struggle to answer the question—"Will you be left behind?"—from the Dallas evangelical couple.

Repeatedly recalling humanity's greatest crimes, Marks cites the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust, the Stalinist terrors, the world wars, the Cambodian and Rwandan genocides. "A god has overseen this nightmare?" he asks. Such a deity has no right to his loyalty or belief, he concludes. "Leave me behind." But Marks also recounts the death of the Puritan Reverend Williams's wife, whose husband remembered, before she was slain by a Mohawk warrior, that she "never spake any discontented word as to what had befallen us, but with suitable expressions justified God in what happened."

Mrs. Williams's gruesome demise at the point of a hatchet, a metaphor for the world's horrors, haunts Marks. The Puritan martyr, having witnessed the murders of her children, still died with her faith intact. Marks wonders if her death could "mean something ultimate?" Despite his professed rejection of God, Marks mostly declines to answer his own question.

Reasons to Believe fails to be very satisfying, not because of his conclusions but because he fails really to have any. ♦

PAUL KOLNIK

Yvonne Borree, Rachel Rutherford, Abi Stafford in 'Dances at a Gathering'

Jerry's Kids

A celebration of Jerome Robbins and the New York City Ballet season. **BY NATALIE BOSTICK**

A collection of photographs of Jerome Robbins hung in the lobby of the David H. Koch Theater for New York City Ballet's Spring Season. Family, rehearsal, and performance shots, they plotted the extraordinary life story of Robbins, from his religious ancestors in Poland to his adopted family in the theaters of New York. In one, a young Robbins demonstrates a dance step for the filming of *West Side Story*; trim and intense, he's dancing in front of tenements that soon would be razed to make way for Lincoln Center. The film adaptation of *West Side Story* would sear an association into the popular imagination: dance, New York, youth. And Robbins would go a long way in establishing New York as the dance capital of the world.

Born Jerome Rabinowitz in 1918, Robbins grew up in Weehawken, New Jersey, and was, for a time, expected to take over the family corset manufacturing business. An autodidact and exacting taskmaster—he once complained to a dancer in rehearsal that her hair was arriving late on the count—Robbins struggled for years with his success and his identity as a Jew, homosexual, and informant to the House Un-American Activities Committee. That existential turmoil, combined with his

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relentless ambition to experiment with (and broaden) his art, transformed the American theater, where he is known for *West Side Story*, *Gypsy*, and *Fiddler on the Roof*—among many others.

Although his shows marked significant advancements in theater dance, it was only fitting that the New York City Ballet would become artistic home to Robbins, a man who dreamed of presenting "American kids dancing" to the world. But in so doing he ensured that he would always be compared with George Balanchine. It's unfortunate that, for many balletomanes and critics, New York City Ballet will forever be the house that Mr. B built.

Ten years after his death, NYCB presented a Jerome Robbins Celebration as part of its Spring Season, and with 33 ballets and four major revivals, added considerable ammunition to the Robbins supporters in the audience. The range of NYCB's Robbins repertory, shown in 10 beautifully curated all-Robbins programs, is staggering: From experimental work (*Moves*, *Watermill*) to the technically virtuosic (*Two and Three Part Inventions*, *Seasons*) to the contemplative (*A Suite of Dances*) and comic (*The Concert*), there is a humanist spirit running through them all, guided by a director's sense of why and where.

Not all his ballets are masterpieces, but the Robbins *oeuvre* is a welcome antidote to the inwardness and body-consciousness of contemporary ballet—and, dare I say it, to the intellectualism of many of the Balanchine ballets. The NYCB website quotes Balanchine: "Classicism is enduring because it is impersonal." If you don't share that philosophy, well, you're a Robbins man.

When Robbins returned from Broadway to the New York City Ballet in 1969, his first ballet for the company was *Dances at a Gathering*. This season it appeared on the "Definitive Chopin" program, along with *Other Dances* and *The Concert*. That program, as well as "American Fare" (*Interplay*, *Ives, Songs*, and *I'm Old Fashioned*), was one of the treats of the Robbins Celebration, showcasing his themes of community, memory, and ritual.

But the ballet that looks best on the company right now is Robbins's epic, *The Goldberg Variations*. A mobius-structured rumination on dance and dancers, it has a distinctly American feeling. Like *Dances at a Gathering*, there are moments when the dancers form an onstage audience for one another. (Robbins liked to watch dancers in rehearsal, when they were dancing for themselves and the movement quality was gentler.) Relationships evolve as dancers change partners, going from groups of two to three to five.

The dance vocabulary of Part I is revelatory. Robbins uses pedestrian movement and often only indicates the ballet technique: Women walk onto demi-pointe, pirouettes are done in coupé position. At times, the dancers simply walk around, which gives the ballet a modern but approachable feeling, and gives the characters dimension. The performance I attended was beautifully danced. Cameron Grant—what a treasure he is to the company—played the Bach delicately.

Some notable performances from the women this season included Yvonne Boree as the Girl in Pink in *Dances at a Gathering*, Ashley Bouder as Mabel in *Double Feature*, Rebecca Krohn in *Moves*, Kaitlyn Gilliland in *Watermill* and *Piano Pieces*, and Wendy Whelan in *In the Night*, *In Memory Of . . .* , and *The Cage*. But the Robbins Festival announced Sara Mearns as the company's best young dancer. She was excellent in all the Robbins ballets, perhaps a result of her early training with Robbins specialist Patricia McBride. Fluid and physical, Mearns is also one of the most musical dancers in the company. Her *rubato* solo in the Spring section of *The Four Seasons* was a delight; you could see her interacting with conductor Fayçal Karoui. She can fly across the stage (*Brahms/Handel*) or be introspective (*Piano Pieces*), demonstrating a sensitivity to the material beyond her colleagues' abilities. At the conclusion of *I'm Old Fashioned*, she was the only lead dancer who adapted to the Rita Hayworth mood on which the role was modeled.

The men at NYCB are sometimes unfavorably compared with the men at American Ballet Theatre, where the repertory is "hunkier." There were many great performances from the City Ballet men this season: Charles Askegard, partnering Wendy Whelan in *In Memory Of . . .* , Andrew Veyette in *The Goldberg Variations*, and in a solo in the otherwise dull *Oltremare*, Joaquin De Luz in "Divertimento" from *Le Baiser de la Fée*, Nikolaj Hübbe (now director of the Royal Danish Ballet) appearing as a guest artist in *Watermill*, and Tom Gold, who is leaving the company this year, as Jimmie Shannon in *Double Feature*. The elegant Amar Ramasar was best in *The Goldberg Variations*, as was Gonzalo Garcia in *Brahms/Handel*.

There were some non-Robbins highlights to the season as well. An Alexei Ratmansky premiere did little for me but seemed to titillate the opening night audience. Damien Woetzel, whom many see as a possible successor to Peter Martins, retired; his understated artistry will be missed. The company performed Susan Stroman's charming *Double Feature*, which I would recommend to parents with children old enough to read the title cards that limn the two-hour ballet.

Ten years after Robbins's death there are only a handful of dancers in the company who knew him. More worrisome, there is no one to take his place. Today, few choreographers are willing to commit to one city, to one group of dancers. Christopher Wheeldon left and Alexei Ratmansky declined a position as resident choreographer with NYCB. Instead, they tour the world as choreographers-for-hire.

This season, each Robbins program began with a film tribute. An onstage screen showed rehearsal videos and still photographs of Jerome Robbins and his collaborators to Chopin mazurkas. It was almost too sad for a Celebration. A feeling of real loss settled over the audience, who sighed at the sight of Leonard Bernstein at his piano, cigarette hanging from his mouth.

With Jerome Robbins went a great era in American theater. I look forward to the next. ♦

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Running with Sarkozy

The personal is the political for playwright Yasmina Reza. **BY KENNETH R. WEINSTEIN**

Campaigning in Aix-en-Provence

GUILLAUME HORCAJUELO / EPA / CORBIS

The election of Nicolas Sarkozy as president of France in May 2007 marked a sea change in French political life. The relatively young and dynamic Sarkozy (52 at the time of his election) captured the Élysée Palace as a candidate of change, promising to lead the nation to systemic economic reform through strong, direct engagement and frank talk.

Since assuming office, Sarkozy has significantly modified French foreign policy, heading international opposition to the Iranian nuclear program, expressing strong existential support for Israel, increasing spending on military modernization, and favoring a French return to NATO's integrated military command.

Dawn Dusk or Night
A Year with Nicolas Sarkozy
by Yasmina Reza
Translated by
Pierre Guglielmina
Knopf, 208 pp., $23

On the domestic front, he has cut taxes (especially on overtime hours worked) and ended special pensions for public sector employees. Unemployment has dropped to 7.12 percent, the lowest point in the past quarter-century.

Large public sector strikes have, however, forced Sarkozy to scale back numerous reforms. This past week, after a long public debate, the National Assembly, by a two-vote majority, significantly modified, rather than scrapped, France's decade-old thirty-five hour work week, allowing employers to negotiate individual agreements with employees to increase work hours.

Sarkozy's domestic reform record would be even more remarkable in France—a country with a long history of interventionism and paternalism—were it not for a personal style that has won him numerous detractors.

Whether of the right or the left, French presidents in the Fifth Republic have assumed the ways of their monarchic predecessors, distancing themselves from policy, leaving details to their prime ministers and governments, while offering rare oracular and pedantic statements on public matters. Rather than keeping such distance, Sarkozy was, until recently, omnipresent, making the kind of policy pronouncements that had been the domain of ministers, and even subcabinet officials. He has been filmed offering the occasional obscenity to those who taunt him in public, sporting Ray-Bans and ill-fitting jogging shorts, answering his cell phone during public events.

Sarkozy's highly publicized divorce from his second wife, Cécilia—who left him and the Élysée Palace for her off-again/on-again boyfriend, now her husband, in New York—and his 80-day whirlwind romance and marriage to supermodel/singer Carla Bruni—known, as she herself admits, for her dalliances with men, reportedly including Mick Jagger and former prime minister Laurent Fabius—has led many to question his psychological stability.

The former president of a key NATO ally, speaking recently at a small Washington lunch, dismissed talk of Sarkozy, noting "one day, Sarkozy gets divorced, the next day, he marries Carla Bruni, and then, the third day he is rejoining NATO." This perception of instability, however, receded as Bruni's evident charm won her kudos from the French press, especially during his successful state visit to London in March. (Her favorability in public opinion polls far

Kenneth R. Weinstein, CEO of Hudson Institute, was the first American to host Nicolas Sarkozy in Washington, in October 2004.

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exceeds her husband's.) Sarkozy's approval poll numbers plummeted from nearly 60 percent to 32 percent at the lowest point of his first year in office. (He has rebounded slightly to 35 percent in the most recent *L'Express* poll.) His wife's popularity now hovers at above 55 percent. And her new album, released in mid-July, *Comme si de rien n'etait* ("As if nothing had happened")—replete with semi-scandalous allusions to past lovers, skyrocketed to the top of the French pop charts.

Sarkozy's decline in public standing predated his divorce, and a significant factor was the publication of *Dawn Dusk or Night* by playwright Yasmina Reza, well known to both the Paris and London stages for her avant-garde satires. Sarkozy himself, to the regret of his key advisers, chose to give Reza almost unlimited access during his campaign for the presidency: In meetings with advisers, backstage before and after speeches and television appearances, riding in his limousine and campaign plane, spending Christmas and New Year's Eve with Sarkozy's family, and late nights out on the campaign trail.

Sarkozy was convinced that his frankness, evident charm, and appeal to left-wing intellectuals—many of whom supported him in 2007—would result in a positive portrait. Merely the fact that he let France's best-known playwright accompany him on the trail showed that he was no stodgy Gaullist, nor a conventional politician. Sarkozy flirts with Reza, giving her insights he shares seemingly with no one else about his campaign aides, journalists, and other politicians. He seems bemused that she passes utterly unknown in St. Etienne, a French city large enough to have a Division I football club, but is greeted warmly by Tony Blair during Sarkozy's campaign trip among the French living in London. *Dawn Dusk or Night* is essentially the Nicolas and Reza Show, a sideshow filled not simply with the banalities of the campaign trail but with deeper discussions about the character of love, mortality, and solitude, interspersed with frank reactions to various campaign events.

The portrait, however, is absolutely devastating, and can only be compared to Joe Klein's *Primary Colors* for the impact it has had on public perception of Sarkozy's personality. Since publication in August 2007, it has sold 100,000 copies and is now available in this somewhat wooden translation by the author herself and Pierre Guglielmina.

Its style, in line with Reza's post-modernist tendencies, is no *Making of the President*. Her fleeting impressions of Sarkozy's interactions with French politicians and journalists are unlikely to be of interest to even the most keen Anglophone observers of French politics. Rather than a campaign chronology suffused with discussion of critical issues, the book is personal, impressionistic, and philosophic.

Reza claims a profound fascination with Nicolas Sarkozy, a man who is far deeper (she lets us know) than those around him. Though she did not know Sarkozy before the campaign, she quickly gains his confidence, and he openly confides in her, not simply about campaign events and personalities but about his existential fears and sexual desires. The result is that Sarkozy, the great seducer who set out to win over the French people, was seduced and outwitted by Yasmina Reza: He gambled that his openness with her would lead to a book that would appreciate his psychological depth. Instead, while Reza recognizes his extraordinary qualities, she is cruel about his shortcomings and failings, especially when compared to another elected official she is romantically involved with, known simply as "G."

The appeal here is that *Dawn Dusk or Night* opens the backstage door to what Reza purports is the real reason Sarkozy is running. Rather than the restless drive to transform France, Reza focuses on what she sees as the psychological origins of Sarkozy's drive, an insatiable self-centeredness, a deep-seated childishness, neuroses (about getting elected, about his weight), restlessness ("inertia is death"), and a deep-seated fear of solitude. Moreover, she furnishes anecdote after anecdote to highlight Sarkozy's vulgarity: his open flirtation with a younger woman who admits she fantasizes about him at night; his fixation on an ad for a Rolex watch on the front page of *Le Figaro* which has captured his attention—while he ignores an ominous adjoining story about Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran.

Readers familiar with Racine's portrait of Louis XIV are bound to be disappointed by Reza and Sarkozy. His personality failings may be real, but her witticisms are the stuff of Paris dinner conversations: deep enough to cause smiles or winces, but not deep enough to cause any real reflection about the character of modern France or modern democratic politics.

Nicolas Sarkozy is, undoubtedly, a complex individual, but Yasmina Reza's portrait is, at best, an extremely incomplete and one-sided portrait of a man of immense longing—whose longings are turned, in short, into the sum of the man. This portrait is also an injustice to someone who is far more complicated than he appears in *Dawn Dusk or Night*. For the moment, the French seem to have seized on Reza's portrait as the complete picture, but to do so would be to underestimate Nicolas Sarkozy as leader. The son and grandson of immigrants who rose to France's presidency on determination, charm, and vision is no ordinary politician. Anyone who has been in his presence senses immediately his instincts, his intense likes and dislikes. This intensity, which sometimes falls hardest on those closest to him, is unlikely to allow him to accept political failure.

Like many of his predecessors, Sarkozy has already begun to reinvent himself, putting the Ray-Bans, the jogging shorts, and cell phone away. His personal life now back in order, by all accounts, he is pursuing his reform agenda through a more distant and regal hold on power. Whatever happens when he faces reelection in four years, one thing is certain: Yasmina Reza will be nowhere near the presidential motorcade. ♦

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Luke the Unloved

A cinematic Holden Caulfield or sensitive drug dealer?

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Poor J.D. Salinger. He captured lightning in a bottle in 1951 with his singular portrait of a lovely, depressed, too-good-for-this-corrupt-world boy in *Catcher in the Rye*, and even now, more than half a century after its publication and more than four decades after Salinger went silent as a writer, he is constantly challenged by whippersnappers who want to supersede his creation with a late-model Holden Caulfield for our times.

The Wackness
Directed by Jonathan Levine

These days, would-be Salingers are all young filmmakers, and their *Catcher in the Rye* imitations are self-consciously "personal" movies with standard-issue rotten parents, irresponsible psychiatrists, and a lot of drugs.

Following on the heels of *Garden State*, *Thumbsucker*, *The Chumscrubber*, and *Charlie Bartlett*, we must now reckon with *The Wackness*. Its Holden is Luke Shapiro, who has just graduated from a fancy Manhattan private school and is on his way to a mediocre college. The year is 1994, for no particular reason, except that it allows its characters to rant about how newly elected Mayor Rudy Giuliani is making life more difficult for the city's graffiti artists and pot smokers. Luke Shapiro has to watch out for Giuliani because he deals marijuana.

(Maybe writer-director Jonathan Levine thought Giuliani would be the Republican presidential nominee and that would add a little kick to his movie. I would say "oops," except that I am the last person to judge him for such a decision, since I wrote a book in 2006 whose central thesis was that Hillary Clinton would be the Democratic nominee for president.)

Luke is careful and precise. He knows how to convince his customers to buy the quantity of pot that will make him the most money. He knows how not to get caught. The Jamaican crime boss who supplies him with his weed likes and respects him.

And yet Luke is a sad, sad boy. He is friendless and alone. Even though he supplies the hip kids at his school, they don't invite him to their parties. His parents do nothing but fight, and we soon learn he is working as hard as he does because he is trying to save his pathetic father from a ruinous business failure. The only person who will listen to him is a psychiatrist named Squires (a scenery-chomping Ben Kingsley), who is the stepfather of the most beautiful girl in school—and is one of his best clients.

His depression has rendered him inarticulate to the point of muteness. Were it not for the patois he has learned from hip-hop, he would barely have a vocabulary at all. The beautiful girl sums it all up in the line that gives the movie its title: "I look at the world and see all the dopeness. You see the wackness." (Dope = fun. Wack = bad.)

That line exemplifies everything that is wrong with this overdone, glum, self-conscious, and self-righteous *bildungsroman*. It doesn't sound like anything anyone has ever said; it sounds like a line written by an adult trying to imagine himself as a kid again. The same is true of Levine's utterly false characterization of his protagonist. The Luke Shapiro who is barely able to speak cannot possibly be the same Luke Shapiro who manages to accumulate $26,000 in a month's time to bail his father out of debt. Luke the drug dealer is such a disciplined and determined worker that one can easily imagine him growing up and becoming a film director with two hip movies under his belt at the age of 32. (Levine is 32, although he says in interviews that he never dealt.) But Luke the depressed boy seems unlikely even to make it through his first week of college.

Luke is the only person in the movie who sacrifices for his family, who takes risks for love, who dives into the ocean to save someone from a suicide attempt. Everyone else we see is just too far gone to care. We are supposed to think that, like Holden Caulfield, Luke is one of nature's noblemen. But he isn't, and that's not only because he's a drug dealer.

The reason whippersnappers like Jonathan Levine haven't been able to knock Salinger off his throne as the spokesman for adolescence is that they fundamentally misunderstand the appeal of *Catcher in the Rye*. Teenagers have been falling in love with Holden Caulfield for 57 years because Salinger made sure to endow his creation with energy, brio, and bite. Holden is not hangdog and sallow, like Luke Shapiro. Rather, he gives perfect voice to every adolescent emotion, from the way he rails against "phonies" to his observation that "all morons hate it when you call them a moron" to his amused and amusing self-portrait: "I'm the most terrific liar you ever saw in your life. It's awful. If I'm on my way to the store to buy a magazine, even, and somebody asks me where I'm going, I'm liable to say I'm going to the opera. It's terrible."

Catcher in the Rye is, in many ways, a pernicious book, one of the opening salvos in the ruinous cultural assault on adulthood. But fair is fair. Salinger was up to something interesting. Would that one could say the same about *The Wackness* or any of its forebears. There is no need for a new Holden Caulfield. The old one is quite enough. ♦

John Podhoretz, editorial director of Commentary, *is* THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

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"Capital One, one of the nation's largest credit card companies, said yesterday that profit in the second quarter fell by 40 percent and it warned that more customers are defaulting on their loans."
—The Washington Post, *July 18, 2008*

Parody

What's in Their Wallet?

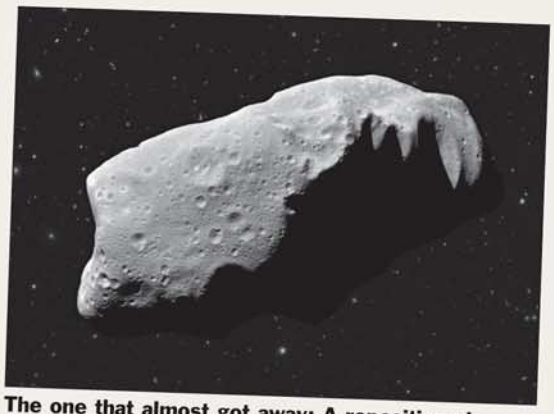
Consumers Hoping to See End Of 'Obnoxious' Capital One Ads

By Zachary A. Goldfarb *and* Alejandro Lazo
Washington Post Staff Writers

Despite its impact on the national economy, Capital One's second quarter woes actually gave a boost to consumer optimism. The reason, according to polls, is the widespread hope that the credit card giant will stop airing its trademark "What's in your wallet?" television ads.

Eighty percent of respondents to an *Adweek* survey described the Capital One commercials as "extremely obnoxious" while fifteen percent viewed them as "grating." Five percent thought they were watching movie trailers. (As trailers, the ads were rated by all respondents as "extremely obnoxious.") At a committee hearing last week, House banking chairman Barney Frank expressed his own concern about the nature of the annoying ads. "With Capital One's revenue in decline, maybe Americans will be asked less about what is in their wallet. In fact, I would like to know what is in Capital One's wallet. How much does it cost to make commercials involving laser beams, boulders, snow monsters, and Visigoths?"

Gary Perlin, chief financial officer of Capital One, recently told *BusinessWeek* that each ad costs on average $30 million to $50 million to produce. "We really want people to get the message," said Perlin. "When we say, 'What's in your wallet?' over and over and over again, are we getting through?" He adds, "Sometimes the only way to get across to people is by using a talking parrot or a chimpanzee in diapers. Or David Spade." Perlin also admitted the recent commercial involving a spacefleet blasting its way through the galaxy cost over $100 million. "We actually filmed it in space."



The one that almost got away: A repositioned asteroid used in a Capital One ad could have had a deep impact on consumers.

A source inside Capital One says the recent drop in profits ($453 million this quarter compared with $750 million for the same period last year) can be easily fixed by scaling back on the ads: "The next time we film a television commercial involving NORAD and an asteroid about to collide with Earth, we probably don't need to actually film at NORAD or reposition an asteroid that came quite close to annihilating

See CAPITAL PUNISHMENT, *A3, Col.1*

Networks Follow Obama into Men's Room

By Howard Kurtz
Washington Post Staff Writer

MOLLY PITCHER REST STOP, N.J. — Having followed Senator Barack Obama all through Europe and the Middle East, the anchors of ABC, CBS, and NBC didn't realize they were following the Democratic presidential candidate into a New Jersey Turnpike bathroom last night until it was too late.

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only when the senator actually pushed shut his stall door.

"What is a urinal doing in TCBY?" asked NBC's Brian Williams before it dawned on him. "We were just hoping to see the senator interact with the American people—something we haven't quite captured yet." CBS anchorperson Katie Couric was unflappable, using the wall-mounted changing table to spread out her notes and make-up

the weekly Standard
August 4, 2008

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